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A MEDIÆVAL ANTHOLOGY

A

MEDIÆVAL ANTHOLOGY

BEING LYRICS AND OTHER SHORT POEMS
CHIEFLY RELIGIOUS

COLLECTED AND MODERNIZED BY

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LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO.
39 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON
FOURTH AVENUE & 30TH STREET, NEW YORK
BOMBAY, CALCUTTA, AND MADRAS
1915

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TO

G. M. S.

PREFACE.

THIS little book is a popular anthology. All the poems in it have been modernized, for the book has to be a first introduction to the riches of the twelfth, thirteenth, fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, for readers who know no Old nor Middle English.

The oldest poems have had to be translated. In doing this I have endeavoured to use chiefly such words as were in our language at the date at which the poem was written, and to use them only in the sense in which they were used in those days.

Where a line is not an exact rendering of the original I have notified the fact.

Where reconstruction of a line could be avoided by retention of one or two old words I have retained them, and put their meaning in a footnote. Where a final e was clearly meant to be sounded, I have kept it where the metre of the modernized version needed it, though I have unfortunately been unable to make the use of this e uniform; it is not uniform in the later originals. A sounded e I have written thus: ė.

My chief aim has been to keep the spirit and character of these poems, whilst making it possible for modern readers to understand them.

Some of the lines in these poems do not scan, but I have generally thought it better to leave them as they were, so long as they were intelligible, than to paraphrase them or to insert adverbs and adjectives solely for the sake of the metre. I would remind

readers that a plural of the verb in "th," and an infinitive in "en," are both permissible in Middle English.

I have included no descriptions of Hell, no treatises on the seven deadly sins, nor directions for hearing Mass. As these are long poems they do not come within the scope of this book. Nor have been included, through lack of space, specimens of the cheerful drinking songs of the time, of the hunting songs, of the nonsense poems, of the elaborate satires on woman's talkativeness, and of poems on the subject "Earth to Earth". Notwithstanding these omissions, I believe this anthology to be really representative of the mediæval mind.

The greater number of these poems are put into modern English for the first time, and I sincerely hope that this little collection may do something towards directing the attention of English men and women to the wealth of material left behind by their pre-Reformation and pre-Renaissance ancestors.

Nearly all of these poems have been printed. They are to be found in the publications of the Early English Text Society, and in the collections of the Percy Society, of Wright, Boeddeker, and Messrs. Sidgwick and Jackson. I have omitted references to these, for anyone conversant with Middle English writings would know them. To others they would be useless.

My sincere thanks are due to The Very Rev. Father Cuthbert, O.S.F.C., for the use of his version of Thomas de Hales' "Luve Ron," and of his translation of "The Song of the Passion"; and to Miss Louise Imogen Guiney for kindly encouragement and timely hints.

MARY SEGAR.

Oxford, *May*, 1914.

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THE EARLY ENGLISH LYRIC.

THE love of summer was deep-rooted in the hearts of the English people of the Middle Ages. Their forefathers had worshipped it with a worship that was a part of their religion. For them summer meant plenty and safety, winter meant danger, hardship, and hunger. Hence arose the festivities of May Day and of Midsummer—festivities of welcome and worship of the earth in her summer renewal.

> Hal wes thu folde, fira modor
> beo thu growende on godes fæthme
> fodre gefylled firum to mytte.[1]

In England the pagan rites of May Day and Midsummer were diverted to Christian ends by the Christian missionaries in the sixth century. They substituted for an appeal to Mother Earth, an appeal to the Queen of Heaven, changing the old rite as little as possible. In this they showed their wisdom, for not only were our early forefathers tenacious and determined, but there seems to have been in them then a need for nature worship, as there is now a need for a scheme of things in which her beauty is recognized. Thus in course of time May became the month of Our Lady; and to Robin Hood, the benefactor of the poor, the monarch of the greenwood whom the people

[1] These lines are perhaps the oldest written lines in Old English. They are from a ploughing song and were sung as the plough cut its first furrow. *Fira modor*, mother of men; *fæthme*, embrace; *mytt*, use, need.

loved, but a man like other men, was transferred the worship of the great god Woden.

Probably the Christian missionaries burnt all the written records of pagan ceremonies that they could find to discourage their continuance without a Christian leaven; and many interesting details of these rites and possibly some beautiful fragments of nature poetry, have been lost to us.

In France traces of this worship of summer lasted in the title of a certain kind of popular song, the "reverdie," the song of the renewal of the earth's beauty. These songs passed from the people to the castle, and the French, with their interest in human nature, their love of speculation and psychology, increased the very slight love element in the "reverdie," until the part that summer played became no more than a conventional opening of the song.

The troubadour would begin his song to his lady by a reference to the coming of the nightingale and of spring:—

> Li roisignors anouce la nouvele
> que la saisons del dolz tens est venue
> que tote riens renaist et renovele
> que li pre sout covert d'erbe menue
> Por la saison qui se change et remue
> Chascuns, fors moi, sejoist et revele, etc.

But the point of his poem is his love for his lady, and later, towards the end of the thirteenth century, the reference to the spring becomes a mere conventional enumeration of blue sky, green meadows, and songs of birds, before the real business of the poem is begun. The real interest of troubadour and trouvère was the human mind; love was their theme, but their song was not the simple outpouring of a sincere affection, it was a recital of the state of the singer's mind as he believed or pretended it to be. Sometimes it was a discussion

of what ought to be done in certain circumstances. Always was its dominant note intellectual; always, too, was its form clever and intricate. Though rarely poets, these early singers were almost invariably artists; and to their care and precision French literature owes no little debt.

Had it not been that in their way they were artists and that the modelling of these verse-forms must have been a certain intellectual exercise, had it not been for the fact that they received a stipend from the great houses in which they lived, the lives of the troubadours must have been unbearable. The boredom of artificiality and make-believe must have settled on them and revealed their lives to them as completely futile. The Albigensian war in the thirteenth century took them all from their verse-making, and poetry died in Provence.

But the trouvères, the Northern singers, had learned much from them, and in their work were many qualities directly attributable to troubadour influence.

There was another kind of primitive popular song in Europe, the song born of the rhythm of movement. The rhythmical click of oars, the beat of the feet of dancers, the hum of the spinning-wheel suggested a song accompaniment. But this sort of song is indigenous in each country. England's working and dancing songs grew up in England. Her debt was to the "chanson courtois," the love song of France.

Before the Norman Conquest there was no lyric poetry in England. There was deep and sincere emotion in the epic narrative and religious poems.

After the coming of St. Augustine, when natural manifestations ceased to be definitely worshipped, there was still regard for Nature among the people; dread yet admiration for her terrible power, and always a sort of realization of the personality of

Nature. This led to a description of grim great scenes, of the wide spaces of the sea, of trackless forests and of storms. The earliest poets meant to "purge the soul by pity and terror" rather than to amuse themselves and others; they meant to awaken in the minds of their hearers such a realization of the power of Nature in comparison with the impotence of man, as would deepen their seriousness. In some sort of way, too, this description of Nature in her grimmest moods was felt to be pleasing to her; she was more likely to mitigate her fury if her power was recognized. But for the sea, a grey northern treacherous sea, there seems to have been even then real love.

> For the harp he has no heart, nor for having of the rings,
> Nor in woman is his weal; in the world he's no delight,
> Nor in anything whatever save the tossing of the waves,
> Oh, for ever he has longing who is urgèd towards the sea.[1]

Seriousness, sincerity, a conviction of the instability of man's happiness, and of the uncertainty of his life and an ever-present realization of the power and claims of the supernatural—these, even before the coming of Christianity, were the characteristics of the "scop," the earliest English poet.

The essential element for lyric poetry was there in the shape of deep feeling.

With the Norman Conquest came a new strain in the race. There was considerable intermarriage between the Norman-French and the English, and to the English character was added a certain lightness and joyousness that it had not known before; not the *abandon* of forgetfulness, but a tendency to dwell on the glad as well as on the terrible side of things. The Englishman saw the beauty around him with new eyes and a new spirit.

[1] Stopford Brookes' translation of "The Seafarer".

With all the strength and sincerity with which before he had worshipped the power of nature, he now loved her in her beauty; particularly in the glory of her springtime renewal. When his ancestors had celebrated May and Midsummer, it had been rather with pious thankfulness for storms and sea floods survived, than with any abandonment of gladness at the coming of the good time. He with his new capacity for giving happy things their due, for "letting himself go" in appreciating them, loved the spring renewal for its own sake. He did not feel as did his ancestors a superstitious fear of putting from his thoughts the menace of storm and flood and famine. He dared to forget the winter. His strong objective nature became obsessed by the ethereal loveliness of May, the fair freshness of morning, the glory of summer.

French lyrics come to England, and love becomes the theme of many English songs, but with the whole difference of the two nations between them.

The Englishman adopts the convention of the nature beginning, but for him it at once ceases to be a convention. He breathes his love for Nature into it and brings it to life.

> In summer when the shaws be sheen
> And leaves both large and long, etc.

or,

> Lenten is comen with love to town,
> With blossom and with bridde's roune, etc.

Sometimes to sincerity and freshness is added a certain charm of mysteriousness:—

> Maiden in the moor lay, in the moor lay, seven night full,
> Good was her meat—but what was her meat?
> The primrose and the violet.

The Englishman's passion in the twelfth and thir-

teenth centuries is inextricably associated with his love for Nature; perhaps because his "Leman"[1] awoke in him the same feelings as did Nature at her fairest. Thus his passion had its feet on earth, it had the simplicity and reality of external, tangible nature; but, like his love for Nature, it had its head in the skies, it had its element of mystery.

He loved his women fair and fresh and simple, yet none more than he realized their supernatural freedom; none more than he appreciated their choice when, like the "maid of Christ" of Thomas de Hales, they "looked out of their house of fleshly affection and went to the unseen Leman who stands calling at the gate".

Thus the passion in the English love songs is never intellectual as it is in the French. The Englishman was too simple and too close to Nature for that. Yet from his very closeness to Nature he had a quality which made his heart a rich soil for the wave of mysticism which swept over Europe in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

In the appeal of Nature there was for him an element which he felt to be beyond his comprehension. Strength of emotion gives the vision of that element in the object loved which, like a light on a horizon, glimmers beyond our grasp. The face of God is mirrored in His creatures, but only a strong love can see it; and when it has seen it it is ever the richer; but it is dumb, for intellect is a slow lagging thing, and words depend on intellect and intellect depends on memory, and memory has never seen its like on earth. The mediæval Englishman loved Nature so strongly and objectively that he felt the presence of this element which he could neither comprehend with his intellect, nor name, nor describe, but being a simple man he did

[1] *Leman*, beloved; *Leof*, dear.

not try to: he just grew used to understanding things by love rather than intellectually.

Added to this, there was deep-rooted in his character a firm faith in the truths of Christianity: this love for a definite religious belief he had inherited from his Anglo-Saxon ancestors. "Fear of the Lord" was another of his characteristics: the Christian modification of his grim forefather's superstitious desire to propitiate in every act of his life the dreadful powers of earth and air which were ever waiting to destroy him.

Such was the moral and spiritual make-up of the mediæval Englishman, and when the mystical teachings of St. Bonaventure and of Richard of St. Victor came to England they came as rain to a parched land. England drank them in, yet made them essentially her own.

The mystical poems have all the English characteristics; in the main they have the character of the English secular love songs: they have the same directness and sincerity and freshness. In them, too, as in the secular songs, the love of Nature is inextricably interwoven.

England took poetic form from trouvère lyrics and from troubadour songs which had passed through the hands of the trouvères. Occasionally English writers definitely set themselves to copy a French model and go so far as to adapt phraseology; but even when the connexion between the two songs is so close the spirit is widely different. The intellectuality of the French lyric awoke no response in England; Englishmen neither understood it nor cared for it, and these French songs came to a nation so individual, so strongly developed on its own very characteristic lines, that everything it took it made its own and filled with its own spirit. Interesting examples of this are troubadour lyrics turned by English singers into

songs to the Blessed Virgin; this happened not infrequently.

The best of English mediæval lyrics are very fine. They have the something which makes them poetry. The worst are neither poems nor even good verse—for the Englishman was not an artist—but none are entirely without interest for the descendants of the men whose emotions they expressed. Their spirit is vigorous and exhilarating; they are spontaneous and fresh even when they possess no more exalted virtues. They show us a race of men sincere, simple, and pious.

When the lyrics are bad from a moral point of view, they are frankly and openly and disgustingly coarse. This would naturally be the expression of immorality of a nation whose chief characteristics were spontaneity and simplicity; but the coarse poems written in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries are far fewer than is generally supposed. Chaucer, great as he is, in some of his tales is the worst of offenders in this respect, and many people's knowledge of mediæval literature begins and ends with Chaucer.

It must be borne in mind that most of these lyrics were meant to be sung, and in some cases it is clear that the music was beating its rhythm in the heads of the verse makers, and getting impatient of the slowness of words, they stuff them in rather indiscriminately to suit their rhythm. On the contrary, some of the lyrics have the intensity, reserve, and swiftness of movement of a ballad.

Alliteration will be found in many of the longer poems. This is significant, for it shows that the friars (who probably wrote these poems) were in close touch with the national revival of the early fourteenth century. Alliteration in a long, regularly stressed line was the verse form in England before the Norman Conquest; and in the early fourteenth century, when

English had arisen triumphant from the fetters of Norman-French and Latin, and Englishmen were realizing themselves as a nation, they set themselves deliberately to the task of reviving the metre of their forefathers.

Some of the lyrics were probably written by such young men as Chaucer's "Clerk of Oxenford"; a few were perhaps written by professional minstrels, survivors of the tribe of "gleeman" who sang, at each Anglo-Saxon noble's board, the doings of the great heroes of epic. Almost all these mediæval lyrics are anonymous, but it must not be inferred from this that their origin is communal.

It is usual to say that Richard Rolle's influence is traceable in the religious lyrics. This may be so; but it is far more likely that both lyric writers and Rolle are exponents of the same tone of mind, a tone of mind that was characteristic in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, of all the men and women in England who had ranged themselves under the banner of Christ. It was not a time when men did things by halves; either they were "Christen-men" with a will, or they threw in their gifts of strong feeling, fearlessness, and vigour with the lot of those who flouted both Church and law. They were not intellectual men, they did not proceed from premises of difficulty to a position of scepticism. Probably even the bad ones believed all the while in the great truths of Christianity with the shadowy belief of men dulled by the gratification of every passion. They were not like the sinners of to-day, their crimes were on the heroic scale of the villains of melodrama. No doubt they were attractive; they would be rich and gaily caparisoned, for a man of this type was successful in theft; they would be fearless and brave, for unless they were competent fighters they would fall at the

hands of the avengers of their victims. For them were probably written by friars the horrible descriptions of the tortures in hell and the inevitableness of death, some of which find a place in every manuscript.

Physically these men and women of the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries must have been splendid creatures. Children who had not the soundest constitutions and the best of health never grew up, for there was little medical skill and no knowledge of the care required to build up to strength a weakly child. Life in the country was healthy, for both men and women worked much out-of-doors, and the foodstuffs were home-grown and unadulterated. Thus, broadly speaking, it was a nation of men and women of fine physique and sound health; and this accounts to some extent for its characteristics.

It has been recently said that some of our twentieth century poets sing of a full, vigorous, glorious life because they themselves are weaklings. From the fact that the mediæval Englishmen sing of morning and spring, of the "sheen" of things, and of their leman's freshness, it cannot be argued that they were like prisoners in the dark longing for these things. They were not imaginative as the modern poet is imaginative: they were simple, they were creatures close to Nature, and they sang of the things they had.

MARY SEGAR.

OXFORD, *May*, 1914.

I.

AN ORISON TO GOD.

[Vernon MS. fol. cv.b.]

LORD, my God all merciable,
I beseech Thee with heart stable
That I may ever will that thing
That most may be to Thy liking,
And wisely follow ever Thy Will;
Definitely learn and then fulfil
What will help Thy Name and bliss.
My state ordain as Thy Will is;
All Thine asking and all Thy Will
Do in me, My Lord, fulfil.

* * * * * * *

Lord, all things that Thine be
Leof[1] and dear make them to me.
And Thou alone, Almighty King,
Out and over all other thing,
Ever be most in my liking.
—AMEN.

[1] *Leof*, beloved.

II.

A SONG OF LOVE-LONGING.[1]

[Vernon MS. fol. cv.b.]

(Based on a translation of St. Bernard's "Jesu Dulcis".)

JESUS, sweet is love of Thee
Nor may nothing so sweet be;
Nought that man may think or see
Can have sweetness near Thee.

Jesus, no song may be sweeter
Nor thought in heart blissfuller,
Nought may be felt lightsomer
Than Thou, so sweet a Lover!

Jesus, Thy love was us[2] so free
That it from Heaven brought Thee:
For love full dear Thou boughtest me,
For love Thou hung on Roodė-tree.

Jesus, for us Thou hung on Rood
For love Thou gave Thy hartė blood;
Love Thee made our soulė's food
Thy love us brought to allė good.

[1] This poem is ninety-six verses long.

[2] us, dative = to us.

Jesus, my Leman [1] thou art so free
That all Thou diddest for love of me.
What shall I for that yieldé Thee?
Thou askest but the love of me.

Jesus, my Dear, my Love, my Light,
I will Thee love and that is right:
Make me Thee love with all my might
And for Thee mourn both day and night.

Jesus, forsooth there is no thing
In all this world of such liking
That knows so much of love-longing
As Thou, Jesus, my Dear Sweeting.

Jesus, Thy love is sweet and strong!
All my life for Thee I long,
Teach me Lord Thy lové song,
With sweet tears ever among.

Jesus, look Thou pity me!
When shall my soul come to Thee?
How long shall it here be
Where I can not my Leman see?

Jesus, Lord, my Sweeting,
Hold me ever in Thy keeping:
Make of me Thy darling
That I Thee love over all thing.

[1] *Leman*, beloved; *Leof*, dear.

III.

A MOURNING SONG OF GOD'S LOVE.[1]

[Vernon MS. fol. ccxcix.]

MY Leman is so true
Of love, and full steadfast,
Yet seemeth ever new.
His love is on us cast.
I would that all Him knew
And loved Him firm and fast:
They never would it rue
But happy be at last.

My Leman is so meek,
So courteous, sweet and still;
Full gentle in His speech,
His words are never grille;[2]
But good He wills to each,
Forget He would all ill:
If I flee He will me seek,
With love He will me till.[3]

Outside although He stands
Calling at my gate,
Till Him freeze feet and hands
Stiff as a wooden stake,

[1] Six verses of a poem of thirty-two verses, all equally beautiful.
[2] *grille*, harsh. [3] *till*, entice.

He takes nor staff nor wand
With wrath me for to wake;
My love Him binds as bond
If I Him pleasure make.

He lovingly abides[1]
Although I stay full long;
He will me never chide
Although I choose the wrong.
He says—"behold My side
And why on Rood I hung:
For my love leave thy pride
And I thee underfong.[2]"

My Leman hath so spread
His Arms that are so long—
Indeed I have no dread;
He will me underfong.[2]
When I was from Him fled,
On Him He took the wrong;
To death till He was bled
For my love would He hong.

I'll dwell with Thee believe,
Leman, under Thy tree.
May no pain e'er me grieve
Nor make me from Thee flee.
I will in at Thy sleeve
All in Thine heart to be:
Mine heart shall burst and cleave
Ere untrue Thou me see.

—EXPLICIT.

[1] Waits for me. [2] *underfong*, receive, take back.

IV.

A SONG OF LOVE-LONGING.[1]

[Vernon MS. fol. ccxcvii.]

(Possibly by Richard Rolle.)

JESUS Sweet, now will I sing
To Thee a song of love-longing:
Do in my heart a quick well spring
Thee to love above all thing.

Jesus Sweet, my dim heart's gleam
Brighter than the sunné-beam!
As Thou wert born in Bethlehem
Make in me Thy lové-dream.

Jesus Sweet, my dark heart's light!
Thou art day withouten night:
Give me strength and eke might
For to loven Thee aright.

Jesus Sweet, King of Land
Make Thou me to understand
That I may in my heart now find
How sweet is Thy lové-bond.[2]

[1] There is an almost identical poem in Harl. 2253 (ed. Wright, E.E.T.S.) There are fifteen verses in Vernon and fourteen in the Harleian text.

[2] The line is thus in the Vernon MS.; in the Harleian MS. it is:

How sweet beeth Thy love-bond,

Jesus Sweet, warrior best!
Thy love, Thou in mine heart fest.[1]
When I go North, South, East or West
In Thee alone may I find rest.

Jesus Sweet, well may him be
That in Thy bliss Thyself shall see:
With lovė-cords then draw Thou me
That I may come and dwell with Thee.
—AMEN.

[1] *fest*, to make fast.

V.

THE SWEETNESS OF JESUS.[1]

[Vernon MS. fol. cv. b.
Thornton MS. leaf 219.
Lambeth MS. 853 and elsewhere.]

JESUS, Thy sweetness who might it see
And thereof have a clear knowing,
All earthly love should bitter be
Save Thine alone without lesing.[2]
I pray Thee, Lord, that lore teach me
After Thy love to have longing
And firmly [3] set my heart on Thee
In Thy love to have most liking.

So sweet a love in earth none is:
Could but our souls Him soothly see
Him to love were mickel bliss;
For King of Love callèd is He.
With steadfast love I yearn for this,
That fast to Him I bound may be,
That my heart should be so much His
That nothing likèd me but He.

[1] There are fifteen verses in this poem.

[2] *lesing*, falsehood, deceit.

[3] MS. Vernon and Lambeth have "sadly," which Furnivall in the glossary of E.E.T.S., "Hymns to the Virgin and Christ," translates "fixedly".

The love of earth His passeth certis [1]
All earthly love that may be here:
God and Man my Spouse He is:
Well ought I wretch to love Him dear.
Both heaven and earth wholly is His,
He is Lord of mighty power;
Callèd He is the King of Bliss—
His love me longeth for to lere.[2]

For pity mine heart should [3] break in two,
To His kindness if I took heed;
Since cause I was of all His woe,
He suffered hard for my misdeed.
To lasting life that I should go,
He suffered death in His manhede.[4]
And when His will was to live also
Again He rose through His Godhede.

Thus would my Leman for me fight
And for me was He wounded sore;
For love of me His death was dight; [5]
Surely love could do no more! [6]
To yield [7] His love have I no might:
I can but love Him more [8] therefore,
And work right well at those works right
That He me taught with lovely lore.

[1] *certis*, certainly, the Vernon MS. has "i-wis".
[2] *lere*, learn.
[3] Vernon MS. has "must".
[4] *manhede*, manhood; cf. maiden hede, Godede.
[5] *dight*, appointed.
[6] Vernon MS. has "What kindnesses could he do more"; Lambeth has "What love could he show more".
[7] *yield*, to give back, to return.
[8] Vernon, "truly"; Lambeth, "heartily".

His lovely lore with work fulfill [1]—
So should I do if I were kind;
Night and day to work His will,
And ever have my Lord in mind.
But ghostly foes do grieve me ill,
And my frail flesh does make me blind; [2]
Therefore His mercy I take me till [3]
For better help can I none find.

Jesus, for the sweetness that is in Thee
Have mind [4] of me when I hence wend;
With steadfast truth uphold my wits
And, Lord, Thou shield me from the fiend!
For Thy mercy forgive my miss;
That wicked deeds me may not schende [5]
Then lead me, Lord, into Thy bliss
With Thee to dwell withouten end.

—AMEN.

[1] Vernon, it means to bestir oneself; really to act up to one's beliefs. In the other MSS. this line is still more obscure.
[2] Vernon has "frailties," the others "frail flesh".
[3] *till*, to, not to be confused with the verb *till*, to entice, draw.
[4] *mind*, remembrance, cognizance.
[5] *schende*, ruin, damn.

VI.

THE BLESSINGS OF THE LOVE OF JESUS.

[Thornton MS. on leaf 211, 20 verses.]

JESUS, I covet to love Thee,
And that is wholly my yearning:
Therefore to love Thee Thou teach me,
And I Thy love shall ever sing.

Jesus, Thy love into me send
And with Thy love Thou me feed.
Jesus, Thy love aye in me lend![1]
Thy Love ever be my soul's meed.

Jesus, my heart with love Thou light!
Thy love me make e'er to forsake
All worldly joy both day and night
Thee alone my joy to make.[2]

Jesus, Thy love me chaufe[3] within
So that no thing but Thee I seek;
In Thy love make my soul to brynne[4]
Thy love me make both mild and meek.

[1] *lend, lende*, tarry, dwell.
[2] The MS. has "And Ioy in þe anely to make".
[3] *chaufe*, heats, warms. [4] *brynne*, burns.

Jesus, my joy and my loving,
Jesus, my comfort clear,
Jesus, my God; Jesus, my King,
Jesus withouten peer.

Jesus, Jesus, my honey sweet,
My heart, my comforting,
Jesus all my bales [1] thou bete [2]
And to Thy bliss me bring.

Jesus, in Thy love wound my thought
And lift my heart to Thee
Jesus, my soul that Thou dear bought,
Thy lover make it be.

—AMEN

[1] *bales*, troubles. [2] *bete*, remedy.

VII.

QUIA AMORE LANGUEO.

Christ's Complaint for His Sister, Man's Soul.

[Lambeth 853.][1]

IN a valley of this restless mind
I sought in mountain and in mead,
Trusting a true love for to find.
Upon an hill then I took heed;
A voice I heard,—and near I yede—[2]
In huge dolour complaining tho:[3]
"See dear soul how my sides bleed
Quia amore langueo."

Upon this hill I found a tree,
Under the tree a man sitting:
From head to foot wounded was he,
His hearté blood I saw bleeding;
A seemly man to be a king,
A gracious face to look unto:
I askèd why he had paining
He said: "Quia amore langueo".

[1] A very popular poem in the Middle Ages, based on the Song of Solomon. Also in other MSS. In most it is sixteen verses long.

[2] *yede*, went.

[3] *tho*, then.

"I am True Love that false was never:
My sister, man's Soul, I loved her; thus
Because we would in no wise dissever
I left my kingdom glorious.
I purveyed for her a palace precious,
She fled, I followed, I sought her so;
That I suffered this pain piteous
Quia amore langueo."

"I crowned her with bliss and she me with thorn;
I gave her a bower, she led me to die;
I brought her to worship and she me to scorn;
I did her reverence, she me vilany.
To love the loving is no mastery;
Her hate made never my love her foe.
Ask me then no question why,—
Quia amore langueo."

"I will abide till she be ready;
I will her sue if she say nay;
If she be reckless I will be steady;[1]
If she be dangerous I will her pray.
If she weep, then hide I ne may[2]
My arms are outstretchèd to clip her me to,
Crying, 'Now soul I come,—soul stay!'—
Quia amore langueo."

"I sit on this hill for to see far,
I look in the valley my fair spouse to see:
Now runneth she wayward, now[3] comes she me near;
For out of my sight may she not flee

[1] The MSS. vary slightly in this line, but the meaning is the same in all of them.

[2] *ne may*, cannot; *ne* is the old negative.

[3] Lambeth 853 has "yet"; others have "now".

Some wait her for their prey to make her to flee,[1]
I run them before and fleme [2] her her foe :
—Return then my spouse again to me,
Quia amore langueo."

"Fair love now let us go play ;
Apples be ripe in my garden.
I shall thee clothe in a new array,
Thy meat shall be milk, honey and wine.
Fair love, then let us go dine ;
Thy sustenance is in my crip,[3] lo !
Tarry thou not, my fair spouse mine,
Quia amore langueo."

"If thou be foul, I shall make thee clean,
If thou be sick I shall thee heal,
If thou mourn ought I shall thee meene ; [4]
Why wilt thou not, fair love, with me deal ? [5]
Foundest thou ever love so leal ?
What would'st thou, spouse, that I should do ?
—I cannot unkindly thee appelle,
Quia amore langueo."

"What shall I do with my fair spouse
But abide her of my gentleness,
Till that she look out of her house
Of fleshly affection ? Love mine she is.
Her bed is made, her bolster is bliss,
Her chamber is chosen, is there none mo ? [6]
Look out on me at the window of kindness,
Quia amore langueo."

[1] i.e. her enemies are all about, lying in wait for her to take her away from me.
[2] *fleme*, put to flight. [3] *crip*, scrip.
[4] *Meene*, comfort ; *mener*, to manage.
[5] Why wilt thou have nought to do with me ?
[6] Is there any more that I can do for her ?

"My love is in her chamber. Hold your peace;
Make ye no noise but let her sleep.
My babe I would not were in dis-ease,
I could not hear my dear child weep.[1]
With watchful care I shall her keep;
Nor marvel ye not that I tend her to;
This hole in my side had ne'er been so deep
But Quia amore langueo."

"Yearn'st thou with love never so high
My love is more than thine may be:
Thou weepest, thou gladdest, I sit thee by;
Yet would'st thou but once, dear, look on me!
—Must I always feed thee
With children's meat? Nay, love, not so:
I will prove thy love with adversity,
Quia amore langueo."

"Wax not weary, mine own dear wife,[2]
What meed is it to live e'er in comfort?
In tribulation I reign more rife
Often times than in disport,[3]
In weal and in woe I am aye to support:[4]
Mine owné wife,—go not me fro!
Thy meed is markèd when thou art mort,[5]
Quia amore langueo."

[1] I may not, etc., in the MSS. but "may not" in M.E. often means "could not," "I could not bear to".

[2] Thus in Camb. Univ. MS. Hh. 4, 12. In Lambeth 853 it is "Waxe not weary mine ownè wife".

[3] The rhythm is faulty in this line in all the MSS.

[4] *aye* in this line = ever.

[5] This word has passed out of use in English writings. If it were used now it would have to be made to agree with the subject; in this case fem.—*morte*.

VIII.

OF CLEAN MAIDENHOOD.[1]

[Vernon MS.]

"That Christ is called Leman to a clean soul."

OF a true love clean and derne[2]
I have now written thee a Ron,
How thou might, if thou wilt, learn
For to love thy Leman
That truest is of allé bearn;[3]
And more of love there knoweth none:
Beware, for He is somewhat stern,
His eye is ever thee upon.

Thou art wrought of such a kind,
Withouten love thou may not be;
And nevermore shalt thou find
One so sweet and fair as He.
If thou wilt Him to thee bind
With true lovė-bondės three,
With all thine heart and will and mind,--
Then from thee will He never flee.

[1] This poem bears a strong resemblance to Thomas de Hales' "Luve Ron" (q.v. No. xx.) but it is in a different dialect and somewhat later. The language of the "Luve Ron" is so difficult that it had to be entirely changed—this I have left as far as possible in the words of the writer. It is clumsy in parts, but wherever it was intelligible to modern readers I have left it as it was.

[2] *derne*, secret, lonely. Often with the meaning of strong, fierce.

[3] *bearn*, knights (Genitive Plural).

Haddest thou founden such a fere[1]
That were so fair as Absalom,
And besides as strong to tear
As in his time was Sampson;
So rich besides if so he were
And e'en as wise as Solomon:
I-wis right nought to Him he were
Whom thou hast chose as thy Leman.

If love will not with thee abide
When thou desire it, thou hast woe;
Ere thou art ware away it glides
It is fickle and false and fro;[2]
It is wayward on all sides:
Whilst it lasts, unrest and woe.—
Be war and see what will betide:
It wavers as the leaf on bough.

The love that will to sorrow wend,
Put it out of all thy thought,
And His love into thine heart bind
That hath thy love so dear i-bought.
If thou haddest to the end
Heaven and earth's each fastness sought
To find a fere that wert so hende[3]
As He, I-wis[4] it were for nought.

He is of mood full meek and mild,
Free of heart and strong in might,
Of gladsome cheer, of words unwild,
Of lovesome look and eyen bright.

[1] *fere*, companion. [2] *fro*, *ffrouz*, *frouh*, loose, unsteady.
[3] *hende*, courteous.
[4] An adverb meaning "assuredly," "indeed".

If thou wouldst win his favour wide [1]
And Him alone wouldst love aright,
Within Thy heart He will abide
And dwell with thee both day and night.

Far more mirth is in his steven [2]
Than heart may think or tongue may name:
As by the swan is the black raven
So by Him is the sunné-gleam.
No more are earth's joys like to Him
Than gall is to the honey stream:
His love is like the circle's rim [3]
Who with His grace all things will leme. [4]

If He touch thy neighbour slain
He riseth up to life anon;
For weal and winning, grief and pain,
All is buxom [5] to this One.
If thou wilt Him in heart well twine
And keep that He not from thee go
Holdé Him with lové-line:
No other bond may hold Him so.

None may be found here in the land
That is so rich a man of fee; [6]
For far more good He hath in hand
Than heart may think or eye may see.

[1] The MS. has "Yif thou wolt do thee in his mylde" means literally: "If thou wouldst engratiate thyself into his mildness".

[2] *steven*, voice. Mirth means rather *joy* than *gaiety* in these poems.

[3] Slightly paraphrased for sake of rhyme. The words in the original have no modern equivalent.

[4] *leme*, light up.

[5] *buxom*, obedient.

[6] *fee*, ownership, poetry.

No king nor knight can loyal be [1]
But first to Him must buxom be.
A secret message He sends thee,
He asketh for the love of thee.

He wants with thee nor land nor lede,[2]
Gold nor silver nor precious stone:
Of all such things hath He no need;
All that is good is with Him one.[3]
If thou with Him thy life wilt lead
And say thou'lt be His own Leman,
I tell thee what will be thy meed:
Forsooth, the Heavenly Kingdom won.

If thou wilt thy Leman queme [4]
And to His bright bower be brought,
In chastity keep thou thee clean
That thou may be i-wemmed [5] nought.
No honey comb that runs in stream
Was never yet so sweetly wrought
Nor ne'er so bright the sonné-gleam,
Than maiden that is clean of thought.

Though all the gold of Araby,
Rich rings and gems and precious stone;
And all the treasure of Asie
And other Kingdoms everyone;

[1] An exact translation of the line in the MS. is impossible to fit in with the rhythm. The line is "Nis Kyng, kniht sweyn ne bonde".

[2] *lede*, people, subjects.

[3] i.e. all these things are in His estimation not to be compared with the greater gift that He asks.

[4] *queeme*, please.

[5] *i-wemmed*, soiled, dirtied; from *wem*, a spot

Were bi-taken[1] in thy Bailey
To weld and haven in thy wone—[2]
It were nought to the glory
Of clean maidenhood alone.

She who will this gem-stone's might
Locken in a sweet love ring,
She will shine then all as bright
As doth the sun without ending,
And be held a full sweet wight
Before that God who for mankind
Would within a Maiden light—[3]
Full sweet a thing is maiden's mind.

[1] *bi-taken*, given over to. [2] *wone*, dwelling-place.
[3] light is here a verb = alight.

IX.

CHAUCER'S EXHORTATION TO YOUTH.

(From the Conclusion to "Troilus and Cressida".)

O youngė freshė folkės, he or she,[1]
In which that love up groweth with your age,
Repair ye home from wordly vanity
And of your heart cast upwards the visage
To thilkė[2] God that after His image
You made, and think ye all is but a passing fair
This world, that passeth soon as flourės fair.

And love ye Him, the which that just for love
Upon a cross, our soulės for to buy,
First died, then rose, and sits in Heaven above;
For He will not be false to you, I say[3]
If all your heart on Him you wholly lay.
And since He best to love is, and most meek,
What need ye feignèd lovės for to seek?

[1] Chaucer is one of the last English poets to use a sounded final *e*. His metre is: | O yoúng | e frésh | e fólk | es hé | or shé |

[2] *thilke*, that same.

[3] Chaucer's line is: "For he nil falsen no wight, dar I seye".

X.

FORTIS UT MORS DILECTIO.

[Balliol MS. 354.][1]

(An alliterative poem; see Introduction, p. 8.)

ON a dear day by a dale so deep
As I went through a wilderness,
To birds all round I took good keep
To hear them sing both more and less.

1.

Some with their song made me to weep
And some me healed of heaviness,
And some also sung me a sleep:
The nightingale was there i-wis,
Then specially for to express
A turtle true did sit and coo[2]
She sang this song in soothfastness:
Fortis ut mors dilectio.

[1] The commonplace book of one Richard Hill, a merchant's apprentice of London, born towards the end of the fifteenth century. It is a collection of all his favourite hymns, poems, and sayings. It is now in Balliol College Library. There are ten verses of the original of this poem.

[2] Not a literal translation of this line in the original.

2.

To that turtle I took entent
Touching the text she told that tide;
Of it I mused long what it meant.
The bird was blithe, on bough did bide:
Then I me busked[1] into a bent,[2]
Under a tree all in that tide;
For I would know ere that I went
This clause expressed and specified:
The bird was eager, withouten pride,
And said: "For nothing flee me fro
Ere thou conceive this clause described":
Fortis ut mors dilectio.

3.

Of this process for to proceed,
At Christ Himself I may begin:
From heaven to earth, hear and take heed
How he descended to cease our sin.
And afterwards yet would he bleed
His own Heart's blood till it would blin,[3]
For no necessity nor for no need
Nor for no treasure that lay to win.
What caused Him to become thy kin?
Nothing but love He had thee to.
Then thus I have defined that dyne,[4]
Fortis ut mors dilectio.

—EXPLICIT.

[1] *busked*, hid. [2] *bent*, corner.
[3] *blin*, cease, i.e. cease to beat.
[4] *dyne*, saying; now the modern "din," a noise.

XI.

[Balliol MS. 354.]

Lully, lulley, lully, lulley!
The falcon hath borne my mate away.

1.

HE bare him up, he bare him down,
He bare him into an orchard brown.
Lully, lulley, lully, lulley!
The falcon hath borne my mate away.

2.

IN that orchard there was a hall,
That was hangèd with purple and pall.
Lully, lulley, lully, lulley!
The falcon hath borne my mate away.

3.

AND in that hall there was a bed,
It was hangèd with gold so red.
Lully, lulley, lully, lulley!
The falcon hath borne my mate away.

4.

AND in that bed there lieth a knight,
His woundes bleeding day and night.
Lully, lulley, lully, lulley!
The falcon hath borne my mate away.

5.

BY that bedside kneeleth a may [1]
And she weepeth both night and day.
Lully, lulley, lully, lulley!
The falcon hath borne my mate away.

6.

AND by that bedside standeth a stone
CORPUS CHRISTI written thereon.
Lully, lulley, lully, lulley!
The falcon hath borne my mate away.

[1] *may*, maid.

XII.

[From a Manuscript in Jesus College, Oxford.]

MY soul has nought but fire and ice,
And my body earth and wood :
Pray we all the Most High King
Who is the Lord of our last doom,
That He should give us just one thing—
That we may do His will.

XIII.

A CONFESSION TO JESUS CHRIST.[1]

[Vernon MS.]

JESUS Christ, my Lord, to Thee
A guilty wretch I yield me:
Broken I have thy commandments
Against mine owné conscience.
But though I have offended ever,
Lord, I have forsook Thee never;
And therefore, Lord, I Thee beseech,
Sad in cheer and mild in speech:
"Give thou me no meed[2]
After my sinful deed".
But after it, Lord in great pity,
Jesus, Lord, cleanse Thou me
And send me often ere I die
Sorrow in heart and tear in eye,
That at mine ending day
Clean of sin die I may,
With Shrift and Housel at mine end
My soul to Thee may happy wend
Into that blissful broad empire
Where Thou reignest Lord and Sire.
—AMEN.

[1] These are the opening lines of a very long poem. It becomes a sort of litany of the saints as the sinner calls on them all to pray for him.

[2] i.e. do not let my sinful undertakings prosper.

XIV.

A PRAYER TO THE FIVE WOUNDS.

[Vernon MS.]

JESUS Christ my Leman sweet,
That diedest on the bitter tree,
With all my might I thee beseech
For thy deep Wounds two and three,
That as firmly may Thy love
In to mine heart fixèd be
As was the spear in to thine Heart
When thou sufferedst death for me.
My Jesus sweet who died on Rood,
For the love of me,—
And boughtest me with Thy Blood,
Have then Mercy upon me;
And should me hinder any thing
From my love of Thee,
Should it be dear it shall be loathed;
So take it away from me.

—AMEN.

XV.

MIRABILE MISTERIUM:

IN FORM OF BREAD IS GOD'S OWN SON.

[Balliol MS.]

MAN is on earth for good and ill
And he must believe with all his will
In that Sacrament of the Altar
That God Himself made at His Supper.
Mirabile!

Though it seem white yet is it red:
It is flesh but seemeth bread:
It is God in His Manhede [1]
As He hung on a tree.
Mirabile!
—EXPLICIT.

[1] *Godhede, manhede*, the modern Godhead, manhood.

XVI.

THE CRUCIFIXION.[1]

"HIS body is wrappèd all in woe,
Hand and foot He may not go.
Thy Son, Lady, that thou lovest so
Naked is nailed upon a tree.

The Blessèd Body that thou hast born,
To save mankind that was forlorn,
His Body, Lady, the Jews have torn,
And hurt His Head, as ye may see."

When John his tale began to tell
Mary would not longer dwell
But hied her fast unto that hill [2]
Where she might her own Son see.

"My sweeté Son, Thou art me dear,
Oh why have men hangèd thee here?
Thy head is closèd with a brier,
Oh why have men so done to Thee?"

[1] Printed for the Percy Society in 1847 by Thomas Wright from a manuscript in his possession. To be found in Chambers and Sidgwick, "Early English Lyrics," p. 146. It is emended from a MS. in the Sloane collection.

[2] This line from the Sloane MS.

"John, this woman I thee betake;[1]
Keep My Mother for My sake.[2]
On Rood I hang for mannés sake
For sinful men as thou may see.

"This game alone I have to play,
For sinful souls that are to die.
Not one man goeth by the way
That on my pains will look and see.

"Father, my soul I thee betake,[1]
My body dieth for mannés sake;
To hell I go withouten wake,[3]
Mannés soul to maken free."

Pray we all that Blessèd Son
That He help us when may no man
And bring to bliss each everyone
Amen, amen, amen for Charity.

[1] *betake*, entrust to.
[2] In Wright's MS. "Keep this woman for My sake".
[3] wake comes from O.E. *wacan*, to watch, remain awake, hence to pray or enact ceremonies all night.

XVII.

THE QUESTIONS OF THE CHILD JESUS.

[Balliol MS. 354 and elsewhere.]

Now sing we right as it is
Quod puer natus est nobis.

THIS Babé to us now is born
Wonderful workés He hath wrought,
He would not lose what was forlorn
But again He hath us bought.
And thus it is
Forsooth i-wis
He asketh nothing but what is His.

* * * * * * *

"Man, why art thou unkind to me?
What would'st thou I did for thee more?
Give me thy true heart, I pray thee;
If thou be damned it rueth me sore."
And thus it is
Forsooth i-wis
He asketh nothing but what is His.

"Man I love thee: whom lovest thou?
I pray thee turn to me again
And thou shalt be as welcome now
As he that never in sin was seen."—
And thus it is
Forsooth i-wis
He asketh nothing but what is His.

XVIII.

THE FLOWER OF JESSE.[1]

[Douce MS., also Balliol 354.]

THIS flower is fair and fresh of hue,
It fadeth never but ever is new ;
The blissful branch whereon it grew
Was Mary mild that bare Jesu.
A flower of Grace
Against all sorrow it is solace.

When that flower began to spread
And its blossom began to breed,
Rich and poor of every lede[2]
They marvelled how this flower might spread ;
And kingés three
That blessèd flower come to see.

Angels there came out of their town
To look upon this Freshhele[3] Flower,
How fair He was in His colour
And how sweet in His savour ;
And to behold
How such a flower might spring in gold.

[1] This version is from the Douce text which is seven verses long and has an introductory verse.

[2] *lede*, nation. [3] *freshhele*, fresh, and *hele*, health.

Of lily, of rose of rise,[1]
Of primerol,[2] of fleur de lyse,
Of all the flowers at my devise
That Flower of Jesse yet beareth the prize
As most[3] of hele[4]
To slake our sorrows every dele.[5]

I pray ye flowers of this country
Where e'er ye go where e'er ye be,
Hold up the Flower of good Jesse
Before your freshness and your beauty
As Fairest of all
That ever was and ever shall.

[1] *rise* or *rys*, a bough. [2] *primerol*, primrose.
[3] *most*, highest, used absolutely in Middle English, e.g. Most of Might.
[4] *hele*, health. [5] *dele*, part, bit.

XIX.

A SONG OF THE PASSION.

(Translated by The Rev. Fr. Cuthbert, O.S.F.C.)

SUMMER'S come and winter's gone,
The days begin to lengthen;
All the birdies everyone
With joyous song bestir them:
Yet does hard grief hold me in bond
Though all around me thrills the sound
Of gladness.
'Tis all for the sake
Of a Childe so sweet
My sadness.

That princely Childe so debonnair
Whose mind is fashioned rarely,
By wood and hill He sought me out,
Nor lingered on the journey:
At length in dire captivity,
Because of an apple on a tree,
He found me.
With His own wounds
He broke the bonds
That bound me.

That Childe so high-born and so free,
To me He bent Him lowly;
For me to Jews He then was sold,
Who did not know Him surely:
"Upon a tree on yonder hill,"
They said, "we'll nail Him fast and well,
All ruthless:
But first we'll heap
All over Him
Shame soothless."

Jesus is that Childe's fair name;
King of all the world, He:
Yet those Jews made game of Him,
With their hands they smote this King,
So tried Him sore; then on the tree
They gave Him wounds first two then three,
Most spiteful:
Of bitter drink
They offered Him
A cupful.

Yet had He not been nailed
Upon that cruel tree,
He who is our true life,
Naught other would it be
But that in hell we all should boil
And never taste refreshment: all
Would fail us:
Nor castle, tower
Nor baron's power
Could save us.

Mary, favoured with all grace,
Maid and mother, there she stood;
Upon the ground her tears fell fast,
And all her tears were tears of blood.

The course ran with His blood
And none who saw His face
Would know Him:
He was so drawn
As deer when slain
At hunting.

So death He took, that gentle Childe,
Upon a high rood tree;
With His own blood He washed away
Our sins whate'er they be:
And on the flood He passèd down
And broke the gates of hell that frowned
So proudly:
And chaced them out
Who gods them thought
Ungodly.

Then on the third day He did rise,
And on His throne He set Him:
He'll come again at judgment day
And give each man his tithing.
Groan he may and weep alway
Who dies in sin; for him 'tis aye
Outlawry:
But grant us, Christ,
With Thee to rise
In glory.

XX.

A LUVE RON.

[*Circa* A.D. 1260.]

(By Friar Thomas of Hales, a version by The Rev. Fr. Cuthbert, O.S.F.C.)

1.

A MAID of Christ did me entreat
That I make her a love-song
By which she might best learn to choose
A lover true and wholesome ;
The truest he of all who're born
Most meet to wed a lady :
Unwilling to refuse her aught
I'll teach her as becomes me.

2.

Maid, first you should consider well
How this world's love is selfish ;
Dangers has it manifold ;
False, fickle, frail and worthless.
Those gallants that were here so bold
Have passed like sudden tempests ;
Under the Earth they now lie cold :
Like withered grass their end is.

3.

There is no man that's born or lives
Who in this world is steadfast;
For here he rues in sorrow oft
In peace he has no holding:
Unto his end he hastens quick
A little while you've lost him;
Sickness and death will drive him off
When he to live desires him.

4.

He's not so rich nor gentle born
But soon he must be fleeing;
In silver furs or scarlet robes,
In gold he'll find no heeding:
He's not so swift death to outrun,
Not one day is he sure of:
Thus is this world as you may see,
A shadow passing onward.

5.

Though he were a rich man
As our King Henry
Or were he fair as Absalom
Of all our Earth the envy;
Yet very soon his pride is gone
Then 'twill not buy a herring:
Maid, if thou seekest a true love,
There is a King worth loving.

(Here six stanzas are omitted.)

6.

Sweet will it be to know
This Prince's goodly virtues:
Fair is He, in colour bright
Glad His cheer; He's courteous;
Winsome in His ways and true,
Great in heart and wisdom:
No cause there'll be to rue thy choice,
Should'st thou share His Kingdom.

7.

Of land He has the widest realm,
He's rich beyond all telling;
North and South and East and West,
They're all within His holding:
Henry, England's sovereign lord
Bows before His Kingship:
Maid, to thee He sends this word,
He would gain thy friendship.

8.

He bargains not for land nor folk,
For gay and rich apparel,
For these He has no need to bid
Who is so rich in chattels:
If thou wilt bring to Him thy love
And be His faithful lover,
Himself will give thee such fair robes
As know not King nor Kaiser.

9.

What sayest thou of such a house
As wrought the King of Israel
Who built with jasper, sapphire, gold
And stones that were a marvel:

Yet fairer far was his fair house
Beyond what I can tell thee:
And but thou love Him, maiden, thou
With this prize shall be wealthy.

10.

It stands upon a trusty hill
The which shall never fail it;
No miner can it undermine
Or underground assail it.
Within you'll find pain's remedy,
Bliss, joy and songful pleasure,
This dwelling, maiden, he'll give to thee
With all its joys together.

11.

There friend from friend turns not away,
And none their rights are robbed of
There neither hate nor wrath prevails,
Nor pride nor envy thought of:
But all shall with the Angels play:
There peace and concord hover;
Are they not, maiden, in a good way,
Who are Our Lord's true lovers?

12.

No man may look on Him
As He is in His might
And yet be reft of bliss
Whilst in Our Lord's dear sight:
His presence is all joy and glee
He's day without night's darkness:
O maid full bless'd, was ever man
Who could withstand His boldness?

13.

A treasure He has ope'd to thee
Better than gold or raiment;
He bids thee lock thy chamber fast
And keep a strict surveillance;
'Gainst thieves and robbers and bad men,
Thou must be swift and wakeful;
Swecter than any flower art thou
When keeping well thy castle.

14.

It is a fire-begotten gem,
The finest 'neath high Heaven;
It healeth love wound: all: before
All others be it chosen:
Happy if anyone be found
Who guards it every moment;
For once 'tis lost, 'tis gone for aye;
'Tis lost beyond reclaimment.

15.

This precious gem of which I tell,
Virginity they name it;
Its price is great, for of all gems
The noblest I proclaim it:
It bringeth thee without a spot
Into bliss paradisal;
The while thou layest it 'neath thy robes
Thou art sweet as spice supernal.

16.

What sayest thou of such a stone
Surpassing all in virtue,
Both amethyst and calcydone,
And lectory and topaz,

And jasper, sapphire and sardone,
Smaragdus, beryl, goldstone,
Which 'mongst all other precious gems
Are great in price and wholesome.[1]

17.

O maid, so as I've told thee
This gem within thy tower
Is brighter far a hundred fold
Than all these stones so fair:
It's fashioned e'en in Heaven's gold
It's full of love the finest:
Whoso' shall keep it fast, shall gleam
In Heaven with light divinest.

18.

Now since to choose a lover true
Thou takest me in counsel,
I'll ever do as thou dost bid
To find thee one most trothful:
And thou, high maid, will make thy choice,
Nor wrongfully pass by him.
'Twere foolishness to take the worse
When the better is for having.

19.

This rhyme I send thee maid, unsealed,
An open page to ponder;
I pray thee spread it out and learn
By rote its every stanza:
And all full courteous thou shalt teach
To other maids this rhyming;
For in good stead 'twill stand the maid
Who learns it to its ending.

[1] Stones were supposed to hold medicinal properties in the Middle Ages.

XXI.

STABAT MATER.[1]

[Vernon MS. fol. cclxxxvi.; MS. Reg. 17, cxvii.; and elsewhere. This version is from the Vernon MS.]

From St. Bernard's "Lamentation on Christ's Passion".

(English version, probably of the 13th century, by Richard Maydestone.)

MARY: I cried: "Maudeleyn, help now!
My son hath lovèd full well thee;
Pray Him that I may die,[2]
That I not forgotten be!
Seest thou, Maudeleyn, now
My Son is hangèd on a tree,
Yet alive am I and thou,—
And thou, thou prayest not for me!"
MAUDELEYN said: "I know no red,[3]
Care hath smitten my heart sore.
I stand, I see my Lord nigh dead;
And thy weeping grieveth me more.

[1] I was not able to collate the texts of this poem till after it had gone to press. I found that some lines were wanting in my version. One after line 14, four after line 31. Also in No. XXII, two lines after line 15. Neither XXI nor XXII loses in beauty or pathos by the omission.—M. G. S.

[2] The MS. Reg. has "Pray Him that I die now".

[3] *red*, good word, word of advice or comfort.

Come with me; I will thee lead
Into the Temple here before
For thou hast now i-wept full yore." [1]

MARY: "I ask thee, Maudeleyn, where is that place,—
In plain or valley or in hill?
Where I may hide in any case [2]
That no sorrow come me till.[3]
For He that all my joy was,
Now death with Him will do its will;
For me no better solace is
Than just to weep, to weep my fill."

The Maudeleyn comforted me tho,
To lead me hence, she said, was best:
But care had smitten my heart so
That I might never have no rest.

"Sister, wherever that I go
The woe of Him is in my breast,
While my Sonė hangeth so
His pains are in mine own heart fast.
Should I let Him hangen here
Let my Son alone then be?
Maudeleyn, think,[4] unkind I were
If He should hang and I should flee."

* * * * * * * *

I bade them go where was their will,
This Maudeleyn and everyone,
And by myself remain I will
For I will flee for no man.

[1] *yore*, perhaps O.E. zeorne = utterly, earnestly, or *yore* = long time. The line is best rendered by a free translation: *Thou art spent with weeping.*

[2] In any case, has not quite our modern meaning.

[3] *till*, to, i.e. "where no sorrow can reach me".

[4] MS. Vernon has *thenne.*

XXII.

JOHN TAKES CARE OF OUR LADY.

[From the same.]

MARY: Ever I cried full piteously:
"Lordings, what have ye i-brought?
It is my Son I love so much:
For God's sake bury Him nought."
They would not stop though that I swooned,[1]
Till that He in the grave were brought.
Rich clothes they around him wound:[2]
And ever mercy I them besought.
* * * * * * *
They said there was no better way
But take and bury him full snel.[3]
Then looked I on my cousin John
For sorrow both a-down we fell—
* * * * * * *
By Him we fell that was My Child.
His sweet mouth well full oft I kissed.
John saw I was in point to spill,[4]
That nigh mine heart did come to break.

[1] Vernon, "They would not stop though I gan sigh".
[2] Another MS. has "They spared nothing for me surely".
[3] *snel*, quickly. [4] *spill*, die.

He held his sorrow in his heart still
And mildly then to me did speak:
"Mary, if it be thy will
Go we hence; the Maudeleyn eke."[1]
He led me to a chamber then
Where my Son was used to be,—
John and the Maudeleyn also;
For nothing would they from me flee.
I looked about me everywhere:
I could nowhere my Sonė see.
We sat us down in sorrow and woe
And 'gan to weep all three.

[1] *eke*, also.

XXIII.

GOD'S MOTHER.

[Sloane MS. 2593.]

I SING of a maiden
That matchless is :[1]
King of all kings
Was her Son i-wis.[2]
He came all so still
Where His mother was
As dew in April
That falleth on grass :
He came all so still
To His mother's bower
As dew in April
That falleth on flower :
He came all so still
Where His mother lay
As dew in April
That formeth on spray.
Mother and maiden
Was ne'er none but she :
Well may such a lady
God's mother be.

[1] MS. "That is makéles".
[2] MS. "To her sone she ches".

XXIV.

A PRAYER TO OUR LADY.[1]

[Vernon MS.]

MARY, mother and maiden
Ever well be thee!
Mother and maiden mild,
Mary, think on me!
Mother both and maiden
Was never anyone
Together, Lady Mary,
But thyself alone.
Mary mild that mother art
And maiden whole and clean,
Shield me now and ever
From sorrow and heart-tene.
Mary out of sin
Ever keep thou me:

* * * * * *

Send me in my life
Grace of Ghostly Food
Wherewith I may my Soul
Each day her feed
So clean in heart and soul
My life I here may lead.
—AMEN.

[1] The opening lines of a poem fifty-two lines long.

XXV.

MATER DOLOROSA.

[From a MS. in Trinity College, Cambridge.]

SUDDENLY afraid,
Half waking, half sleeping,
And greatly dismayed—
A woman sat weeping,
With favour in her face far passing my reason.
And of her sore weeping this was the enchason,[1]
Her Son in her lap lay slain, she said, by treason.
If weeping might ripe be, it seemed then in season.
"Jesus," so she sobbed
So[2] her Son was bobbed[3]
And of His life robbed.
She added these words that I tell thee:
"Who cannot weep, come learn of me."

I said I could not weep I was so hard-hearted,
She answered me shortly with wordes that smarted:
"Lo! nature shall move thee, thou must be converted;
Thine own Father this night is dead". This she retorted.[4]

[1] *enchason*, cause.
[2] *So*, thus.
[3] *bobbed*, mocked, scorned.
[4] MS. *thwerted*.

"Jesus, so my Son is bobbed
And of His life robbed."
For sooth then I sobbed.
She added these words looking at me:
"Who cannot weep, come learn of me".

"Now break heart I pray thee, this cors lies so rewlie;[1]
So beaten, so wounded, ill-treated so foully.
What wight may behold Thee and weep not? None truly
To see my dead dear Son, bleeding, lo, thus newly."
Ever still she sobbed
So her Son was bobbed
And of His life was robbed.
Renewing these words that I say thee:
"Who cannot weep, come learn of me".

On me she cast her eye and said: "See man thy Brother!"
She kissed Him and said: "Sweet, am I not Thy mother?"
And swooning she fell, this pitiful mother;
They both looked as deadly, the one and the other.[2]
Yet she revived and sobbed
How her Son was bobbed
And of His life was robbed.
"Who would not weep?"—this is her lay;
And with these last words she vanished away.

[1] *rewlie*, pitiable.
[2] MS. "Ther hit wold be no nother".

XXVI.

MY LEECH.

[Harleian MS.]

NOW shrinketh, rose and lily flower,
That awhile bear such sweet savour:
In summer, that sweet tide,
There is no queen so stark and stour.[1]
Nor lady fair so bright in bower,
That dead shall not hence glide.
She who will fleshly lust foregoe
And heavenly bliss abide,[2]
On Jesus let her thought bestow,
That pierced was in His side.

From Peterborough on one morning
As I me wended on my ploughing,
On my folly I thought:
Lamenting I 'gan my mourning
To her that bore the heavenly king:
I mercy her besought.
"Lady, pray thy Son for us,
That us so dearly bought,
And shield us from the loathly house
That for the fiend was wrought."
* * * * * * * *

[1] *stour*, warriorlike. [2] *abide*, wait for.

Better is her medicine
Than any mead or any wine;
Her herbés smelleth [1] sweet.
From Caithness to Dublin
There's not a leech so fine
Our sorrows all to bete.[2]
A man that feeleth any sore
And his folly would lete,[3]
Withouten gold or any treasure
He may be sound and sete.[4]

Of penance are her plasters all;
And ever serven her I shall
Now and all my life.
Now is free that ere was thrall;
All through that lady, gent [5] and small:
Praisèd be her Joyés Five!
Whereso anyone sick is
Thither hie thee blithe:
Through her are soon brought to bliss
Both man and maid and wife.[6]

Her Son that lost His life on tree
(On our sinnes may He have pity!)
Is He that ruleth Heavenly bowers.
Woman with your beauty
Think now on Godés shoures;[7]
Though ye be white and bright of ble,[8]
Fall shall soon thy flowers.
Jesus have mercy on me
Who all this world honours.

—AMEN.

[1] A plural in *th* is permissible in M.E.
[2] *bete*, remedy.
[3] *lete*, leave.
[4] *sete*, whole, healthy.
[5] *gent*, noble.
[6] MS. "Bo maiden ant wyfe".
[7] *shoures*, fear, terror.
[8] *ble*, hue, complexion.

XXVII.

ROSA MYSTICA.

[Trinity College, Cambridge, MS.]

THERE is no rose of such virtue
As is the rose that bear Jesu:
Allelulia.

For in this rose containèd was
Heaven and earth in little space:
Res Miranda.

By that rose we may well see
There be one God in Persons Three:
Pares forma.

The angels sang, the shepherds too:
Gloria in Excelsia Deo:
Gaudeamus.

Leave we all this worldly mirth
And follow we this joyful birth:
Transeamus.

XXVIII.

A CAROL.

[Sloane MS.]

LULLAY mine Liking, my dear Son, my Sweeting ;
Lullay my dear Heart, mine own dear Darling.
I saw a fair maiden
Sitten and sing :
She lullèd a little Child
A sweetė Lording.
Lullay mine Liking, my dear Son, my Sweeting ;
Lullay my dear Heart, mine own dear Darling.

That Eternal Lord is He
That made allė thing ;
Of allė Lordės He is Lord
Of every King He's King.
Lullay mine Liking, my dear Son, my Sweeting ;
Lullay, my dear Heart, mine own dear Darling.

There was mickel melody
At that Childės birth :
Though the songsters were heavenly,[1]
They madė mickel mirth.
Lullay mine Liking, my dear Son, my Sweeting ;
Lullay my dear Heart, mine own dear Darling.

[1] MS. Allė tho wern in hevenė bliss.

Angels bright they sang that night
And saiden to that Child:
"Blessèd be Thou, and so be she
That is both meek and mild".
Lullay mine Liking, my dear Son, my Sweeting;
Lullay my dear Heart, mine own dear Darling.

Pray we now to that Child
As to His Mother dear:
To grant them all His blessing
That now maken cheer.
Lullay mine Liking, my dear Son, my Sweeting;
Lullay my dear Heart, mine own dear Darling.

XXIX.

THE NATIVITY.[1]

[Balliol, leaf 226, back. Also in other MSS.]

THE other night
I saw a sight,
A star as bright
As any day;
And ever among
A maiden sung:
Lully by, by lully, lully.[2]

A lovely lady sat and sang
And to her Son did say:
"My Son, my Lord, my dear darling,
Why liest Thou thus in hay?
Mine own dear Son,
How art Thou come!
Art Thou not God verey?
But never the lesse
I will not cease,
To sing: By, by, lully, lully."
The other night
I saw a sight,
A star as bright
As any day;
And ever among
A maiden sung:
Lully by, by lully, lully.

[1] Slightly abridged.

[2] Lully, lulley, or lullay, the mediæval song word for putting babies to sleep. It occurs in all cradle songs and persists in modern English in the expression Lul-a-bye.

Then spake the Child that was so young,
And thus methought He said:
"I am known as Heaven's King,
In a crib though I now be laid.
Angels bright
Round Me shall light
And of that sight
Ye may be light[1]
And sing: By by lully, lully."

The other night
I saw a sight,
A star as bright
As any day;
And ever among
A maiden sung:
Lully by, by lully, lully.

"Jesus my Son, Heaven's King,
Why liest Thou thus in stall?
And why hast Thou no rich bedding
In some rich kingly hall?
Me thinketh by right
The Lord of might
Should lie in rich array:
But never the less
I will not cease
To sing: By by lully, lully."

The other night
I saw a sight,
A star as bright
As any day;
And ever among
A maiden sung:
Lully by, by lully, lully.

[1] The same word is frequently used as a rhyme in Middle English.

"Jesus my Son, I pray Thee say,
As Thou art to me dear,
How shall I serve to Thee Thy pay
And make Thee right good cheer?
All Thy Will
I would fulfil
Thou knowest it well in fay:
Both rock Thee still
And dance Thee still
And sing: By by lully, lully."
The other night
I saw a sight,
A star as bright
As any day;
And ever among
A maiden sung:
Lully by, by lully, lully.

"Mary, Mother, I pray thee
Take me up on loft;
And in thine arm
Thou lappe me warm
And dance me now full oft:
And if I weep
And will not sleep
Then sing: By by lully, lully."
The other night
I saw a sight,
A star as bright
As any day;
And ever among
A maiden sung:
Lully by, by lully, lully.

"Jesus, my Son, Heaven's King!
If it be Thy Will
Grant Thou me my asking
As reason would, and skill:
Whatsoever they be
That can and will be
Merry on this day,
To bliss them bring
And I shall sing:
Lully by, by lully, lully."
The other night
I saw a sight,
A star as bright
As any day;
And ever among
A maiden sung:
Lully by, by lully, lully.

XXX.

[British Museum Addl. 5465.]

1.

THE other night
I saw a sight
All in my sleep:
Mary, that may,
She sang: Lullay,
And sore did weep.

"Ah my dear! ah my dear Son!"
Said Lady Mary, "Ah my dear!
Kiss Thy mother, Jesu,
With a laughing cheer."

2.

To keep she sought
Full fast about
Her Son from cold.
Joseph said: "Wife,
My joy, my life,
Say what ye would."

"Ah my dear! ah my dear Son!"
Said Lady Mary, "Ah my dear!
Kiss Thy mother, Jesu,
With a laughing cheer."

3.

"No thing, my spouse,
Is in this house
Unto my pay:
My Son, a king,
That made all thing,
Lieth in hay."

"Ah my dear! ah my dear Son!"
Said Lady Mary, "Ah my dear!
Kiss Thy mother, Jesu,
With a laughing cheer."

4.

"My mother dear,
Amend your cheer,
And now be still;
Thus for to lie
It is soothly
My Father's Will."

"Ah my dear! ah my dear Son!"
Said Lady Mary, "Ah my dear!
Kiss Thy mother, Jesu,
With a laughing cheer."

5.

Derision,
Great passion,
Infinitely
As it is found;
Many a wound
Suffer shall I.

"Ah my dear! ah my dear Son!"
Said Lady Mary, "Ah my dear!
Kiss Thy mother, Jesu,
With a laughing cheer!"

6.

On Calvary,
That is so high,
There shall I be,
Man to restore,
Nailed full sore
On to a tree.

"Ah my dear! ah my dear Son!"
Said Lady Mary! "Ah my dear!
Kiss Thy mother, Jesu,
With a laughing cheer."

XXXI.

OUR SOVEREIGN LADY.

[Bassus, sig. C 2.]

A MAID peerless
Hath borne God's Son:
Nature gave place
When Ghostly grace
Subdued reason.

As for beauty
Or high gentry
She is the flower:
By God elect
For this effect
Man to succour.

Of virgins Queen,
Lodestar of light,
Whom to honour
We ought endeavour
Us day and night.

XXXII.

FOREBODINGS OF THE PASSION.[1]

[Balliol, leaf 225, back.]

A BABE is born to bliss us bring.
I heard a maid lulley and sing.
She said: "Dear Son, leave Thy weeping:
Thy Father is the King of bliss."
Now sing we with Angelis:
Gloria in excelsis.

"Lulley," she said and sung also,
"My own dear Son, why art Thou wo?[2]
Have I not done as I should do?
Thy grievance tell me what it is."
Now sing we with Angelis:
Gloria in excelsis.

"Nay, dear mother, for thee weep I nought,
But for the woe that shall be wrought
To Me ere I mankind have bought.
Was never sorrow like it i-wis."
Now sing we with Angelis:
Gloria in excelsis.

[1] Seven verses out of eleven. Few mediæval carols are entirely joyful, in most the Sacred Infant foresees His Passion.
[2] *wo*, sad.

"Peace, dear Son! Thou grievest me sore:[1]
Thou art my child, I have no more.
Should I see men mine own Son slay?
Alas, my dear Son, what means all this?"
Now sing we with Angelis:
Gloria in excelsis.

"My hands, mother, that ye now see,
Shall be nailèd to a tree;
My feet also fast shall be,
Men shall weep that shall see this."
Now sing we with Angelis:
Gloria in excelsis.

"Ah, dear Son! hard is my happe
To see my child that lay in my lap,—
His hands, His feet that I did wrappe,—
Be so nailed; they never did amisse."
Now sing we with Angelis:
Gloria in excelsis.[2]

"Ah, dear mother, yet shall a spear
My heart asunder all but tear:
No wonder if I care-ful were
And wept full sore to think on this."
Now sing we with Angelis:
Gloria in excelsis.

—EXPLICIT.

[1] MS. "tell me not so".

[2] Commentators have suggested several slight variations from the MS. in this verse for the sake of the rhyme. Some of them I have adopted.

XXXIII.

SONG TO OUR LADY.

[Egerton MS. 613.]

OF one that is so fair and bright
Velut maris stella,
Brighter than the day is light,
Parens et puella.
I cry to thee to turn to me ; [1]
Lady, pray thy Son for me,
Tam pia.
That I may come to thee,
Maria.

In sorrow, counsel thou are best,
Felix fecundata :
For all the weary thou art rest,
Mater honorata :
Beseech Him in thy mildest mood,
Who for us did shed His Blood
In Cruce.
That we may come to Him
In luce.

All this world was forlorn,
Eva peccatrice.
Till Our Saviour Lord was born
De te genetrice ;

[1] MS. "I crie to the, thou se to me".

With thy Ave sin went away,
Dark night went and in came day
Salutis.
The will of healing sprang from thee,
Virtutis.

Lady, flower of everything,
Rosa sine spina,
Thou bore Jesus, Heaven's King,
Gratia Divina.
Of all I say thou bore the prize,
Lady, Queen of Paradise
Electa :
Maiden mild, Mother
Es effecta.

Well He knows He is thy Son,
Ventre quem portasti :
He will not refuse thy bone,[1]
Parvum quem lactasti :
So courteous and so good He is,
He hath brought us to our bliss
Superni,
Who hast shut up the dark foul pit
Inferni.

—EXPLICIT CANTUS ISTE.

[1] *bone*, request.

XXXIV.[1]

[Balliol MS.]

TO see the maiden weep her Son's passion,
Filled my heart deep with full great compassion.

1.

Bought and sold full traitorously
And to a pillar bound,
The Jews beat Him full piteously
And gave Him many a wound.
To see the maiden weep her Son's passion,
Filled my heart deep with full great compassion.

2.

Full maidenly, full motherly,
When she the cross beheld:
The tears from her eyen fell;
She said: "Alas, my child!"
To see the maiden weep her Son's passion,
Filled my heart deep with full great compassion.

3.

Eisell[2] and gall they gave Him to drink
And pierced Him to the heart;
His Blessed mother and maiden clean
She swoonèd for His smart.
To see the maiden weep her Son's passion,
Filled my heart deep with full great compassion.

[1] Four of five verses.

[2] *Eisell*, vinegar.

4.

Now Mary mild, pray for us
And bring us all to bliss,
That we may be in joy with thee
Where He, thy sweet Son, is.
To see the maiden weep her Son's passion,
Filled my heart deep with full great compassion.

XXXV.

[Balliol MS.]

WIT hath wonder and kind[1] ne can.[2]
How maiden is mother and God is man.
Leave thy asking and believe that wonder,
For might hath mastery and skill goeth under.[3]
—Laus Deo.

kind, human nature.
ne can, does not know; *ne*, not; *can*, know.
A verse much in vogue throughout the Middle Ages.

XXXVI.

SONG OF THE NATIVITY.

[Balliol MS. leaf 219 back.]

FROM Heaven was sent an Angel of light
Unto a City that Nazareth hight,
Unto a maid, a byrdé so bright
And full of bliss:
Nomen Maria virginis.

The Angel went forth and nought he ceased,
Before that maiden he him addressed:
He said: "All hail, thou art full blest
And gracious;
Quia tecum est Dominus.

When Mary this heard, astonished was she
And thought whatever this greeting might be.
The Angel her showed of Grace plenty
And great solace;
Et dixit "Maria ne timeas".

The Angel said: "Thou maiden mild,
Thou shalt conceive and bear a Child:
Thy maidenhood shall ne'er be defiled.
Call Him Jesus;
Hic erat Altissimi Filius.

When Mary as bright as crystal stone,
These words heard she answered anon;
And asked how all this might be done
And said: "How so?
Quia virum non cognosco".

The Angel said: "Thou maiden still,
The Holy Ghost shall it fulfil."
The maid replied with voice so shrill[1]
And said meekly:
"*Ecce Ancilla Domini*".

Soon after this the Child was born
In Bethlehem on a winter's morn:
Now make we merry Him beforn[2]
And sing Nowell;
Quia missus est Angelus Gabriel.

[1] A shrill voice was a voice of clear timbre. The word shrill had not the disagreeable meaning we now attach to it.
[2] *beforn*, before = in His presence.

XXXVII.

SONG OF THE ANNUNCIATION.

[Balliol MS. leaf 221 back.]

GABRIEL that Angel bright,
Brighter than the sunlight,
From Heaven to Earth he took his flight:
Regina coeli, laetare.

In Nazareth, in that city,
Before Mary he fell on knee;
And said: "Mary, God is with thee."
Regina coeli, laetare.

Hail be thou Mary of might the most![1]
In thee shall light the Holy Ghost
To save the Soulés that were lost.
Regina coeli, laetare.

Hail be thou Mary, Maiden sheen![2]
From the fiends that be so keen,
Keep us and save us from all tene.[3]
Regina coeli, laetare.

[1] "Most of might" was a favourite appellation of the Blessed Virgin.

[2] Sheen. This word survives in modern English as a noun, e.g. the "sheen of silk".

[3] *tene*, care; Old English teona = care, worry, sorrow.

XXXVIII.

[Vernon MS.]

SWEET Lady, Saint Mary,
Full of all courtesie,
Mother of Mercy and of pity,—
Mine hope, mine help is all in thee.
Well I wot that born thou were
In help of all us wretches here.
Beseech thy Son lovèd and dear
For me a sinful wretch down here.
Beseech him for the love of thee
That He have mercy on me;
And help me at mine ending day
From the foul fiends dire affray.
Beseech, also, the Flower of All,
Thy Son, my Lord, for my friends all;
That He them keep with His grace
From all perils in each place;
And give them good life and good end
And joy when they shall Heavenwards wend:
And also other Christian men.
Good Lord Jesus, Amen, AMEN.[1]

[1] From "A Confession to Jesus Christ," a poem 96 lines long.

XXXIX.

FROM A SALUTATION TO OUR LADY.

[Vernon MS.]

(*In alliterative long lines.*)

HAIL be thou Mary, Mother and Maid,
Mild and meek and merciable!
Hail, richest fruit of steadfast faith!
Against each strife steadfast and stable.
Hail, steady soul in each assay!
Under Thy Son is none so able.
Hail, true, truthful and treatable!
Hail, chieftain chosen of Chastity!
Hail, homely, hendė[1] and amiable!
Pray then for us to Thy Son so free. *Ave!*
Hail, star that never stinteth light!
Hail, bush burning that never was burnt!
Hail, rightful ruler of every right!
Hail, spices savour that never was spent!
Hail, builder bold of Christ's bower!
Hail, rose highest in texture and hue,
Of all earthly fruits the fairest flower!
Hail, turtle trustiest and true,
Of all truth thou art the treasure!
Hail, blossom on brier shining so white!
Pray to Thy Son kind without measure. *Ave!*

[1] *hende.* This word originally meaning either "courteous" or "apt," "clever," persists as our modern word "handy".

Hail, help of them that have to die.
Love of Angels, mirth of man!
Thy succour Lady send from on high.
Hail Lock! Hail Love! Hail Mary!
I hail thee with heart and thought:
I hail thee with mouth and eye:—
For my wild works I am nought.
I hail thee, and mercy cry,
Bring me to bliss that ever shall be.[1]

—AMEN, *Ave!*

[1] These lines are not consecutive in the original, which is 132 lines long. They are translated rather than modernized.

XL.

THANKSGIVING TO OUR LADY.

[Vernon MS.]

MY life I thought me had forsaken
And dreary death me to him taken
To make me with him wone.[1]
I called and cried loud as I could:
"Lady Mary! Help by the Rood!
Now pray to Thy sweet Son!"

Thy grace came down to me that day
Into the Castle there as I lay:
Men said I was but dead.
Jesus, whom thou lovest dear,
Came to me then through thy prayer
In the form of bread.

Mary, of joy thou bearest the prize;
For thou art gate of Paradise
Where joy is merry and long.
Fair mother and maiden sweet,
With thy Five Joys I thee greet:
Lady, hear my song. Ave Maria!

[1] *wone*, dwell.

Blessed be, Lady, thy sweetness.
All mankind more or less
To Hell were they gone;
They were all in Hell fast bound
Till thy Son with bloody wound
Had loosed them out each one. Ave!

Blessed be, Lady, thy fairhede[1]
Mingled all with white and red,
Thy brightness and thy grace.
Lady, flower of all lands,
Bring him out of care-full bonds
That sings of thy sweet face.

Blessed be, Lady, thy stable thought:
Our smallest needs forgettest thou nought,
Thou dealest never crooked.
Before the King thou deemest it right
To plead for men both day and night
For good and eke for wicked. Ave!

Blessed be, Lady, thy great strength:
Thou hast extended my life in length
And done a true almswork.
Thou holdest the fiend under foot.
Thee greets now from his heart's root
Theophilus the clerk. Ave!

[1] *fairhede*, fairness; cf. maidenhede.

XLI.

[Add. MS. 31922, British Museum.]

TROLLY lolly loly lo,
Sing Troly loly lo.
My love is to the green wood gone
Now after will I go;
Sing trolly loly lo, lo, ly, lo!

XLII.

A WINTER SONG.[1]

MERRY it is while summer ilast[2]
With fowelés song—
But now nigheth windés blast
And weather strong.
Ei, Ei, how this night is long!
And I with well mickle wrong
Sorrow and mourn and fast.

[1] This, one of the earliest known lyrics, is in a manuscript in the British Museum (Additional 5465). The manuscript contains both words and music.

[2] *ilast*, lasts.

XLIII.

[British Museum Add.: 5665.]

SUMMER is i-cumen in,
  Loudly sing cuckoo!
Groweth seed and bloweth meed
And springeth the wood now.
  Sing Cuckoo!
Ewė bleateth after lamb,
Loweth after calvė cow;
Bullock sterteth, buckė verteth;[1]
Merrily sing, Cuckoo!
  Cuckoo, cuckoo,
Well singest thou, cuckoo,
Nor cease thou never now.

[1] *verteth*, harbours in the green.

XLIV.[1]

NOW welcome Summer, with thy sunnė softe,
That hast this winter's weather overshake,
And driven away the longė nightės black!

Saint Valentine that art full high on loft
Thus singen smallė fowlės for thy sake
"Now welcome Summer, with thy sunnė soft,
That hast this winter's weather overshake."

Well have they causė for to gladden oft
Since each of them recoverèd hath his make,[2]
Full blissful may they singen when they wake
"Now welcome Summer, with thy sunnė soft
That hast this winter's weather overshake,
And driven away the longė nightės black".

—GEOFFREY CHAUCER.

[1] From the "Parlement of Foules," 680-692; a roundel sung by certain birds to Nature.

[2] *make*, mate.

XLV.

LENTEN[1] is come with love to toune
With blossom and with briddés roune[2]
That all this bliss bringeth.
Dayés eyés in the dales
Notés sweet of nightingales
Each fowl song singeth.
The threstlecock[3] him threateth oo,[4]
Away is now their winter woe
When woodruff newly springeth,
This fowles singeth ferly[5] fele[6]
They look no more on Winter weal
And all the woodé ringeth.

The rose prepareth her array,
The leavés on the tender spray
Waxen all with will.
The moon sends forth her sheen,
The lily's lovesome to be seen,
The fennel and the fille.[7]
They court their mates the wildé drakes,
Each pair of creatures merry makes
As stream that striketh still.[8]
Moody men moan, so also I,
Who am by love shot through
For love doth like me ill.

[1] *Lenten*, the spring season.
[2] *briddés roune*, bird's song, din.
[3] *threstlecock* or thrush.
[4] *threateth oo*, always chides.
[5] *ferly*, wondrous.
[6] *fele*, many.
[7] *fille*, thyme.
[8] flows sweetly.

The moon sends forth her light
So doth the seemly sonnė bright
When briddes singeth breme.[1]
Dewės moisten now the downs,
Beasts come forth with secret rounes
Domės for to deem.[2]
Wormes[3] woweth under cloude,[4]
Women waxeth wounder-proud[5]
So well it now them seme.[6]
If I shall long for one of them
Such wealth of gladness I forego—
I will in woods be fleme.[7]

[1] *breme*, lustily.

[2] *domės* means "wills," "judgments," "doom"; *deem* means to "perform," "carry out," "judge"; thus the line may mean "to do just as they will," or "to slay," "to be out on a predatory expedition".

[3] *wormes*, all the beasts of the reptile world.

[4] *cloude*, rock.

[5] *proude*, beautiful.

[6] *it now them seme*, suits them, i.e. the springtime.

[7] *fleme*, be a runaway, self-banished.

XLVI.

[Royal Appendix 58.][1]

BY a bank as I lay
Musing myself alone, hey ho!
A birde's voice
Did me rejoice
Singing before the day;
And me thought in her lay
She said: "winter is past, hey ho!"
"Then dyry come dawn, dyry come dyry, come dyry!
Come dyry, come dyry, come dawn, hey ho!"

The mistress of music
The lusty nightingale, hey ho!
Full merrily
And secretly
She singeth in the thick;
And under her breast a prick,
To keep her from sleep, hey ho!
"Then dyry come dawn, dyry come dyry, come dyry!
Come dyry, come dyry, come dawn, hey ho!"

Awake therefore, young men,
All ye that lovers be, hey ho!
This month of May,
So fresh, so gay,
So fair in fields on fen,
Hath flourished ilk again.
Great joy it is to see, hey ho!
"Then dyry come dawn, dyry come dyry, come dyry!
Come dyry, come dyry, come dawn, hey ho!"

[1] Early reprints of this have the music. It will be noticed that the refrain is onomatopœic.

XLVII.

ALYSOUN.

[Harleian 2253.]

1.

BETWEENI March and Averil,
When spray beginneth to spring,
The little fowl hath her will
On her voice to sing.
I live in love-longing
For seemliest of allé thing;
She may me blissé bring;
I am in her bandoun.[1]
A happy hap I have y-hent;[2]
Shot from Heaven it is me sent;
From all women my love is lent[3]
And lights on Alysoun.

2.

In hue her hair is fair enough,
Her browé brown, her eyen black;
With lovesome cheer she on me laughs,
With middle small and well i-make.
Unless she will me to her take
For to be her owné make[4]
Desire to live I shall forsake
And lifeless fall adown.

[1] *bandoun*, thraldom.
[2] *i-hent*, seized for mine.
[3] *lent*, turned.
[4] *make*, mate, as in all these poems.

A happy hap, I have y-hent;
Shot from Heaven it is me sent;
From all women my love is lent,
And lights on Alysoun.

3.

At nights when I do toss and wake
For this my cheeks they waxen wan,
Lady, all for thine sake
Longing ever spurs me on.
On earth there's not so wise a man,
That all her bounty telle can,
Her neck is whiter than the swan—
The fairest maid in town!
A happy hap I have y-hent;
Shot from Heaven it is me sent;
From all women my love is lent,
And lights on Alysoun.

4.

I am with wowing [1] all forwake,[2]
Weary as water in wear.
Lest any take from me my make,
I have i-yearnèd yore.[3]
But better to suffer a while sore
Than mourn for ever more.
Most graceful under gore! [4]
Hearken to my roun!
A happy hap I have y-hent;
Shot from Heaven it is me sent;
From all women my love is lent,
And lights on Alysoun.

[1] *wowing*, sighing for a loved one; the modern "woo".
[2] *forwake*, spent with vigils. [3] *yore*, long. [4] *gore*, skirt.

XLVIII.

[Balliol MS. 354.]

In whatsoever state I be
Timor mortis conturbat me.

AS I me walked one morning,
I heard a bird both weep and sing.
This was the tenour of his talking,
"*Timor mortis conturbat me.*"

I asked this bird then what he meant.
He said "I am a musket[1] gent;[2]
For dread of death I am nigh shent;[3]
"*Timor mortis conturbat me.*"

Jesus Christ, when He should die,
To His Fathèr loud gan He cry;
"Father," He said, "in Trinity,
Timor mortis conturbat me."

When I shall die I know no day,
Therefore this songé sing I may;
In what place or country can I not say.—
Timor mortis conturbat me."

[1] *muskct*, sparrowhawk. [2] *gent*, noble.
[3] *shent*, confounded, destroyed.

XLIX.

A SONG OF THE SHEPHERDS.[1]

[Balliol MS. 354 elsewhere.]

Terly terlow, terly terlow,
So merrily the shepherds began to blow!

ABOUT the field they piped full right,
It was the middle of the night;
Adown from Heaven there came a light.
Terly terlow.

Angels there came a company
With merry songs and melody;
The shepherds anon gan them aspy.
Terly terlow.

The shepherds hied them to Bethlehem,
To see that Blessèd Sonné-Beam;
And there they found the World's Light-stream.
Terly terlow.

Now pray we to that young meek Child
And to His mother fair and mild,
Whose maidenhood was ne'er defiled.
Terly terlow.

[1] From a composite text.

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L.

ST. BERNARD.

[Vernon MS. fol. 304 and elsewhere.]

From "Man's Foes".

IF the fiend through his cheating
Or defect of thy withstanding
In any sinnė hath thee cast,
Arise up as a champion,
Stand stiff and fall no more adown
For such a windė's blast.

Now go into the fair field
And take Our Lord to be thy shield
Thy hand thou stretch and try;
And think upon Him with mild mood
Who for thee gave His Hertė-Blood
To win for thee thy country.

Now take the Cross as thy staff
And think on Him that theron gave
His Life that was so leef.[1]
Thou art well armed with staff and shield;[2]
So make the traitor to thee yield,
Avenge thee on that thief.

Fight fastė for thine ownė right
And get thee heavenly blissė bright
While thou hast time thereto.
Thine ownė heritage it is
And so shalt thou it never miss
Unless thou it forego.

[1] *leef*, dear.

[2] The original (in modern writing) is, "Wite wel thi fot with stayesord".

LI.

[Balliol MS.]

Pray for us to the Prince of Peace,
Amice Christi Johannes.

TO Christ's own darling,
The which was maid both old and young,
My heart is set a song to sing:
Amice Christi Johannes.

For he was so clean a maid
On Christ's breast asleep he laid,
Prophets of Heaven to him said:
Amice Christi Johannes.

When Christ before Pilate was brought
This clean maid forsook Him nought!
To die with Him was all his thought:
Amice Christi Johannes.

Christ's mother was him [1] betake,[2]
A maid to be another's make [3]
Pray we to him that he us not forsake,
Amice Christi Johannes.

[1] Him is here dative—to him. [2] *betake*, *betaken*, i.e. entrusted.
[3] *make*, companion.

LII.

THE SHEPHERD'S GIFTS.

[From one of the Townley Mystery plays.]

Primus Pastor.

HAIL, comely and clean,
Hail, young Child!
Hail, Maker born e'en
Of a Maiden so mild!
Thou hast cursèd, I ween,
The false fiend so wild;
The giver of teen[1],
Now goes he beguiled.
Lo! He merries.[2]
So He laughés, my Sweeting,
A welfare meeting!
I have holden my heting[3]
Have a bob of cherries.

Secundus Pastor.

Hail, Sovereign Saviour,
For Thou hast us sought!
Hail child, hail flower
That all things hast wrought!
Hail, full of favour,

[1] *teen*, cares, sorrows. [2] *merries*, grows merry.
[3] *heting*, promise.

That made all of nought!
Hail! I kneel and cower,
A bird have I brought,
To my bairn.
Hail, little tiny Mop![1]
Of our creed Thou art crop;[2]
I would drink on thy cop[3]
Little day star.

Tertius Pastor.

Hail, darling Dear,
Full of Godhede!
I pray Thee be near
When I have need.
Hail!—sweet is Thy cheer.
My heart wouldé bleed
To see Thee sit here
In such poorë weed[4]
And with no pennies.
Hail! put forth Thy dall[5]
I bring but a ball;
Have, and play Thee withal
And go to the tennis!

[1] *Mop*, baby. [2] *crop*, the flower, the head, summit.
[3] This line probably means, "I would drink to thy health".
[4] *weed*, clothing. [5] *dall*, hand.

LIII.

REVERTERE.

[Balliol MS. and elsewhere.]

IN a time of a summer's day—
The sun shone full merrily that tide—
I took my hawk me for to play,
My spaniel running by my side.
A pheasant hen then gan I see,
My houndés put her soon to flight;
I let my hawk unto her flee;
To me it was a dainty sight.

My falcon fast pursued her prey,
My hound gan renné [1] with glad cheer;
But soon I trippèd in my way
My leg was caught all in a brier.
This brier forsooth it did me grieve;
I-wis it made me turn again
For it bare writing on every leaf,
This Latin word "Revertere".

Note.—The Summer day is generally supposed to be the time of youth, the hawk to be the passions, and the brier, conscience.

It is unusual for any bird (excepting the sparrows) to be used in mediæval allegory to represent anything but virtues. So much imaginative respect seems to have grown up around the falcon that an old medicine book tells us that her owner must thoroughly wash his hands before touching her if he has been doing anything he should not have been doing—otherwise she will sicken and die. It adds that the best way to keep a falcon in health is for its owner to live a pure and virtuous life.

[1] *renne*, run.

I halèd and pullèd this brier me fro,
And read this word full merrily:
My heart fell down into my toe,
That was before full likingly.
I let my hawk and pheasant fare,
My spaniel fell down by my knee:
It took me with a sighing sare,[1]
This new lesson "Revertere".

Liking is mother of sinnés all
And nurse to every wicked deed;
To much mischief she maketh men fall
And of sorrow the dance she doth lead.
The hawk of youth is high of port
And wildness maketh him widé to flee
And oft to fall in wicked thought,[2]
And then is best—"Revertere".

[1] *sare*, sore, Balliol MS. In the Lambeth MS. it is *fare*.
[2] In Lambeth MS. it is *sort*.

LIV.

WOMEN BETH BOTH GOOD AND TRUE WITNESS ON MARY.

[Harleian MS. 7358 and elsewhere.]

WOMEN beth both good and schene,[1]
In handés, feet, and facé clean;
Women may no better bene.
Witness on Mary!

Women beth gentle on her tour;[2]
A woman bare Our Saviour;
Of all this world woman is flower.
Witness on Mary!

Worship we womanés face,
Woman graceth many a place;
For woman is the well of grace.
Witness on Mary!

Love a woman with hertė true,
She will changė for no new;
Woman beth of wordés few;
Witness on Mary!

Women beth good without lesying;[3]
From sorrow and care they will us bring;
Woman is flower of allé thing.
Witness on Mary!

[1] *schene*, bright, comely: now the noun "sheen".
[2] In authority. [3] *lesying*, deceit.

LV.

OF WOMEN COMETH THIS WORLD'S WEAL.

GOD honourèd women in His life
And kept them in His company,
Both widow, wench and wife
That was withouten vilany.
'Gainst women some men like to strive,—
I say they should dread lest they die
And of that sin soon them shrive
And to Our Lady mercy cry;
And in worship of St. Mary
Such unwisdom should repeal.
Defend you all from such folly,
For of women cometh this world's weal.

God and man were far atwinne
When He made mankind of sea-flood:
I would then know when Eve did spin,
From whom you think your gentry stood?
How became ye God's own kin
Unless that women mothers were?
Alas, how many men do sin,
Who speak of women nothing fair.
Women are so mild of mood,
Lovesome, lovely, lively, leal.
Witness on Him that died on Rood,
Of women cometh this world's weal.

Women wrappen us in weed
When we are naked-born and bare;
And then they foster us and feed:
Their love for us is fond and rare.
When we are old they must us heed
And cheer us out of many a care;
When we are nasty[1] them we need,—
Unless they helped how should we fare?
At dreadful doom how should we dare
For fear of false fiends fierce and fele[2]
Unless we gave in life her share
To woman cause of this world's weal.

God that made both sun and moon,
To all the women succour send;
In all the deeds that they have done
And will do; keep away the fiend.
And to Mary I bid a bone,[3]
Ward women whereso'er they wend;
From sin and sorrow shield them soon
Now in life and at its end.
I warn all that be women's friend,
I cannot praise them halfendele[4]
—My vows of service now I send
To Her of whom came this World's Weal.

[1] *Nasty*, in MS.
[2] *fele*, many.
[3] *bone*, request.
[4] *halfendele*, half enough.

LVI.

BE WISE.

[Balliol MS.]

BE merry and suffer, as I advise,
Wheresoever thou sit or rise:
Be well aware whom thou despise;
Thou shalt kiss who is thy foe.
He is wise, I tell thee so,[1]
Who can be merry and suffer woe.

* * * * * * * *

Many a man thinketh himself so stout,
Whatsoever he thinks he says it out:
But if he look well about
His tongue may be his greatest foe.
He is wise, I tell thee so,
Who can be merry and suffer woe.

Be merry! now, is all the song,
The wise man taught both old and young;
He who can suffer and hold his tongue—
He may be merry and nothing rue.
He is wise, I tell thee so,
Who can be merry and suffer woe.

If any man displease thee aught
Suffer it with a merry thought;
Throw care away and grieve thee naught
But shake thy lap and let it go.
He is wise, I tell thee so,
Who can be merry and suffer woe.

[1] MS. "He is wise, so must I goo".

LVII.

[Balliol MS.]

AN old saw saith: "Unknown, unkissed".
Where's little love is little trist:[1]
Now e'er beware of "Had I wist".[2]

And note this saw for it is new
"Men drink" it saith "e'en as they brew".

Note.—From "An Old Saw". Compare the sentiment in these verses with the proverbs of Alfred.

[1] *trist*, trust. [2] "*Had I wist*," "If only I had known".

LVIII.

FROM "THE DUTY OF PRELATES".

[Balliol MS.]

AS I was wandering one evening
Between the corn beside a balke,[1]
The dew in the dale began to spring,
And herdsmen around their sheep to walk,
Then one of them began to talk,
Full carefully clothèd from the cold:
"These Prelates,—they like us should stalk
To keep their sheep well in the fold".

The seed of sin so thick is sown
Among the clergy with pomp and pride
That the grass of grace cannot grow;
So your sheep are hurt on every side.
But the Grace of God must be your guide
To cure your conscience that is so cold:
Be ware then when abroad you ride
Lest your sheep be scabbèd in the fold.

Peter at Rome some time Pope was:
Our Lord's law he kept truly;
He preached the Gospel and through God's grace
Full many a soul was saved thereby.

[1] *balke*, ridge between fields.

This made men flee from their folly
To keep their souls from evil's cold:
Peter never rode too royally
But kept the sheep well in the fold.

The Grace of the Gospel was manifested
So long as they evidenced cleanness of life;
In that time its truths were not hid
From king nor knight, nor maid nor wife.
For dymes and offerings there was no strife;
Then covetousness walked away cold:
For among men Charity then was rife;
Their sheep they kept well in the fold.[1]

Bishops were then steadfast and stable
And free of the goods that God them lent;
They preached the Gospel without fable
In this world where'er they went.
Then rode no prelates to Parliament
With knights and squires and yeomen bold:
I dare no more say lest I were shent,[2]
But I rede[3] you, keep well God's fold.

[1] The metre of this verse is not good in the original.
[2] *shent*, confounded. [3] *rede*, advise.

LIX.

(*Narrative from "Devotions for Corpus Christi".*)

[Vernon MS. f. cxcv. and elsewhere.]

A Jew sometime and a Christian man
Were fellows in the way upon,
And by the way, as right it was,
The Christian man heard ring to Mass.
The Christian man said: "Bide thee here
While I go in to say my prayer".
The Christian man went into Church;
And the Jew began to grucche[1]
For he thought his fellow was
Too long praying at the Mass.
The Jew rose up and entered too
To see what men therein might do:
And then he saw, and cried in dread,[2]
The priest held high over his head
A fair young child, i-wounded sore
In foot and hand: yet saw he more,
That there was neither wife nor man
But held up hands and sat on knee.[3]
And from that child he saw come flee
Another such as he saw stand
And light between each mannes hand.

* * * * * * * *

[1] *grucche*, grumble.
[2] Original line, "Then sauh he atte weuede".
[3] i.e. knelt.

The Christian man after the Mass
Came to the place where the Jew was.
The Jew askèd: "How farest thou?"
The Christian answered: "Better than thou;
For since I have my God within
The better can I my way begin".[1]
"Fellow," quoth the Jew anon
"Help me to be a Christian man."
The Jew was christened as he sware,
For grief at the wounds of that child fair.

[1] In the original there is here a long discussion about what the Jew has seen.

LX.

OF A MINER, THOUGHT DEAD, AND HIS KIND WIFE.

(Narrative poem from Robert of Brunne's "Handlyng Synne".)

THERE was a man beyond the sea
A miner in a great Citee.
Miners, they make in hillés holes
As men do now that seeketh coals.
A great parti [1] of this man's mine
Fell down one day and closed him in.[2]
His wife bemoaned her husband sore;
(God grant that many such women were!)
She helped his soul in everything
In almsdeeds and in offering,
She offered for him at the alter
Full of wine a great pitcher
And a fair fresh loaf withal,
Every day as a principle.[3]
It fell out at the twelve months' end
His fellows towards that hill gan wend
And working came to that place eft
Where they their mate that day had left.
Right there as they to work began
They piercèd through e'en to the man.

[1] *parti*, part. [2] Description omitted.
[3] Moralizing on her wifely virtues omitted.

The man in good estate they found
Living and well without a wound.
They gret their mate and fain would lere[1]
How he had livèd all that year.
And then he told them every one
How he had livèd there alone:
"I have had a gracious life
Through courtesy of mine own wife;
Every day she has me sent
Bread and wine as a present".

* * * * * * * *

They led the man into the town
And told the miracle up and down.
That so might all men understand
That God is paid of good offrande,[2]
For all this tale, men, for your lives
Trust not only in your wives,
Nor in your children nothing;
Make *yourself* your offering.
Over all things it hath power,
The Sacrament of the Alter! Amen.

[1] *lere*, learn.

[2] Some French words were then used in English with both the French spelling and the French pronunciation.

LXI.

[Vernon MS.]

THE HERMIT'S HUMILITY.

(*Lines from the "Miracles of Our Lady".*)

ONCE on a time in Rome bifell
This story:—Listen well!
There was some time in that city
A woman that loved not chastity:
Her life she led in great folly.
That woman decked her quaint and gay
To walk in the city. On a day
She met with a holy hermit
That in devotion had great delight.
He bade his beads devoutly
Holy Aves to Our Lady.
That woman as she came him by
And saw him praying busily,
Of sin and folly she told him till,
She thought to tempt the hermit's will.
The hermit answered her nought
In his devotion was all his thought.
She said: "Thou fool, thou dotard friar,
Why chaffest thou and chatterest here?
What is all that private noise
That thou mutterest under thy voice?"
The hermit answered full mildly:

"Damsel hear the cause then why:—
I am myself a sinful man
And of goodness little I can;
To God I pray both day and night
For grace to serven Him aright;
For all that lead their lives in guilt
And for thee woman if thou wilt,
That God may grant thee such a grace
To do some good whilst thou hast space,
Both thou and I and all other:
For every Christen is other's brother."
The woman said: "Prayest thou for me?"
Then said the hermit: "Damsel, yea;
I pray for thee as for myself".
The damsel quickly said again:
"To pray for me thou work'st in vain.
Dear friar, of me why takest thou heed?
For of thy prayer have I no need."
Then said the hermit: "Yea, damsel,
Ye needeth me nought I know it well,
Me nor yet no prayer of mine;
But meekly I ask thee now for thine.
Three Pater Nosters pray for me;
And to God's sweet mother Mary
Three Aves thereto for my mercy—
To Jesus and His mother Mary—
To grant me of my sins mercy.
I pray thee do this thing for me;
Thy work rewarded well shall be
And in this life and afterward.
I pray thee, damsel, hold foreward."[1]
Then answerèd the damysel:
"That is but little, I grant it well.
I will do as thou hast besought
Whether it availeth me or not."

[1] *hold foreward*, to keep a promise.

The hermit meekly knelt adown
And thanked her with devotion.
The damsel then went forth her way
About her pastimes and her play;
And in a street as she came by,
She saw a chapel of Our Lady.
Into that Chapel she made entree:
There was an image of Mary free,
Of that Blissful Maiden mild:
Upon her arm she bare her Child.
The damsel cast on her a sight
And thought that image fair and bright,
And knew herself by promise bound
To kneel down there upon the ground.
She thought to gain her no reward
But could, for shame, not break her word.—
She kneeled adown upon her knees
The Paters said and the Avës.
Then thought the damsel verily
The babe looked on her wrathfully.
She thought then that He turned His back
And these words to His mother spake:
"Mother seest thou how there at hand
Mine enemy prayeth for my friend?"
She thought His mother answered again
With wordës mild and clear and plain:
"But Soné for thy friendës sake
Though Thine enemy make a mistake,
Forgive it Son of Thy Mercy
As Thou art Lord God Almighty;
And also Son for the love of *me*
Let now her sins forgiven be."
The Child answered with lovely cheer:
"My sweet Mother, my Norice dear,
Thy prayer must needs now granted be:
Whate'er thou wilt I must give thee".

Then Mary gently said: "Damsel,
Thou shalt have grace, thou hast heard well;
And thou may see right well by this
That thou hast led thy life amiss.
For thou hast led an evil life.
Take a priest and do thee shrive;
With sorrowful heart and repentaunce
Gladly undergoe penitaunce.
For at this forty dayés-end
Thou shalt out of this world wend
And live with us in mirth and play
That lasts in joy forever and aye."
This was that sinful woman's end
Through help of Mary, Maiden hende.[1]
Beseech we earnestly that may[2]
To help us too at our last day. Amen.

[1] *hende*, courteous. [2] *may*, maid

LXII.

OUR LADY IS SURETY FOR A MERCHANT.

[From the same.]

AT Constantinople in that City
Dwelled a merchant of hearte free,
Sometime rich with property
And after fell in poverty.
He loved God and Our Lady
And served that Maiden specially.
And in that city soothly
A Jew there was and wonder rich.
The merchant had great thought and care
For he had not wherwith to chaffare[1]
He casteth him therefore to borrow
And to the Jew went on the morrow,
There he told him his mischief
And prayed him then for some relief.
The Jew answered with great honour :[2]
"Show how thou wilt make me sure,
Me to pay at a certain day;
Then thee to help I shall assay".
The merchant said: "I am behind;
For me there will no man him bind,
He that sometime was my fere[3]
Me passeth by withouten cheer,[4]
But if thou dorst now be so hardi
To take Our Lady, Saint Mary,

[1] *chaffare*, carry on business.
[2] *honour*, pompousness.
[3] *fere*, companion.
[4] *cheer*, kindliness.

As my surety, by my fay
I should thee pay well on thy day."
The Jew then said: "My good fere
I grant thee sire all thy prayer;
For I have heard often sithe[1]
That Lady to be Courteous and blithe.
Men say she will them never fail
That in her service will travail;
Therefore go we to your Church
And there this treaty we will work:
Take thou her image by the hond;
From thee I ask no other bond."
To that Church they came anon.
The merchant in good manner
Kneeled adown and said his prayer;
And after that with good visage
Went him up to that image
And said: "Jew, so God me save,
For surety this Lady have,
That I shall pay thee at thy day
Truly and well all thy monnaye".
The Jew then took a sum of gold,
Good monnaye and right well told,
And set him then a certain day
To pay it back without delay.
The Christian man was now full fain
And happy went him home again.
And he arrayèd him full fast
A ship with sail and eke a mast.
To Alexander he set sail;
There he arrived withouten fail.
Then he boughtė fast, and sold
And every day the pounds he told.
He thought so much on his winning
He forgot the day of his paying

[1] *sithe*, time.

Till the evening had come round
Of the day that he was bound.
It fell into his mind then
He should be held a false man
To that country so far atwinne [1]
In so short while might he not win [2]
But to hold his day of pay
He to Our Lady began to pray.
He cast it in heart utterly
To trust in God and in Our Lady.
He took him then a little chest
Therein he put as no man wist,
The sum of gold verryment [3]
That the Jew had to him lent;
And a letter in which he said:
"Here Jew is thy monnaye paid".
Into the sea he then it cast
And prayed Our Lady to be its mast,
Rudder, and oars, and guide it o'er
The strong seas waves to the Jew's own door.
The Jew arose upon the morn
As I you tell withouten scorn;
And stilley forth he did then stalk
By the sea-side for a walk
That ebbed and flowed fast by his house
Where he dwelled with his spouse.
Soon he was aware enow
Of a coffer towards him thrown,
Floating in the salty sea.
Great wonder he had what it might be
He found therin verrement
The gold he had to the merchant lent.
In the letter he read anon
From what man it there came from.

[1] *atwinne*, apart. [2] *win*, arrive.
[3] *verryment*, exactly.

Long long afterwards in God's name
The merchant man was comen home.
With the Jew soon he meets
And full graciously him greets.
The Jew then said discourteously :
"I trow then that thou scorn me
Why hast thou broken thy term day
Of the payment of my monnaye?"
The merchant said : "Thou wittest well
I have payed thee every del.[1]
Go we now to church i-fere
And there the sothé thou shalt hear."[2]
When they were by that image
That for the gold was made his gage,
The merchant said with mildest steven :[3]
"Lady that art Queen of Heaven,
Help me now from worldly shame.
I pray thee now in thy Son's name,
As I trust thy Son and thee,
Lady truth show forth for me."
The image spake as God it bade :
"Jew thou hast thy monnaye had
In the bottom of thine ark
Thou hast laid it, every mark."
The Jew wox[4] ashamèd ; so
He granted well that it was so.

And he had example of good doing
A Christen man for becoming.—
This Lady is full gracious
That thinketh ever thus on us.
Therefore to her look thou be true
Nor change her service for a new! Amen.

[1] *del*, part.
[2] *sothé*, truth.
[3] *steven*, voice.
[4] *wox*, grew.

LXIII.

[MS. in Trinity College Library, Cambridge.]

PROVERBS OF ALFRED.[1]

THUS quoth Alfred:
Without wisdom
Is weal worthless;
For though a man had
Seventy acres
And he had sown them
All with red gold
And that gold grew
As grass doth on earth,
Were he for his pains
Not a whit further
Unless he from the beginning
Make himself friends.
For what is gold but stone
Unless a wise man has wisdom?

[1] Alfred was so much beloved that for two centuries after his death every wise saying was attributed to him. During the darkest time, immediately after the Norman Conquest, when to speak English was a penal offence, men were garnering in silence the wisdom of their race and still attributing it to Alfred. Cf. the feeling for King Arthur after the conquest of Wales.

Thus quoth Alfred:
A young man should never
Be sorrowful too quickly
Though his state please him not
Or though he has not;
All that he would
For God may give when He will
Good after evil,
Weal after woe.
Well is it for him
That it is ordained thus.

Thus saith Alfred:
Hard it is to row
Against the sea that floweth;
So is it hard to work
Against misfortune.
The man who in his youth
So worketh
And world's wealth here wins
That he may in old age
Enjoy ease,
And eke with his world's wealth
Please God ere he die;—
His youth and all that he has spent
He has well bestowed.

Thus quoth Alfred:
Listen, ye my people,
Yours is the need
And I will teach you
Wit and wisdom
That all things surpass.
More secure may he sit
Who hath them as companion.

For though his property leave him
His wit leaves him never more:
He will never perish
Who hath it as comrade
Whilst his life here endures.

Thus quoth Alfred:
If thou hast sorrow
Say it not to thine arrow;
Whisper it to thy saddlebow
And ride thee singing forth.

* * * * *

Do not let it known
All that thy heart knows.

Thus quoth Alfred:
It is idleness and too much pride
That teach a young wife evil ways;
And so often she does
Things that she should not do.
Easily might she shun misbehaviour
If she often were weary
With toil. . . .

* * * * *

Often mouseth the kitten.
After the mother cat.

* * * * *

Many an apple is bright without
And bitter within;
So is many a woman in her bower
Beautiful
And yet is she disgraceful.
So too is many a young man
Goodly to see on horseback

And yet is he little worth—
Splendid in the sunshine
But evil in a dark hour.

Thus quoth Alfred:
Many a man thinks
What he need not think
That he hath a friend.
He promises himself all fair
But he is fair before
And fickle behind.
Believe never in the man
That is of much speech,
Nor believe all thou hearst in song.

Thus quoth Alfred:
Through saws is a man wise,
And through himself[1] man is wise.
Through lying is he hateful
And through crafty tricks.
* * * * *
Keep thyself from lying
And all vice shun:
So mayst thou in thy tribe
Be beloved by everyone,
And love thy neighbour:
He is in thy need good.
At market and at church
Make thyself friends
With poor and with rich,
With all men alike.
Then mayest thou indeed
Sit happy at home
And happy fare over the land
Wherever thou wilt.

[1] *himself*, i.e. through experience.

Thus quoth Alfred:
Chide not with a fool

* * * * *

Nor never thyself begin
To tell tidings
At a freeman's table.
With very few words a wise man
Can enclose much;
A fool's bolt is soon shot.
I hold him for a fool who sayeth out all
His will
When he should have remained silent.
Often does a tongue break bones
Though she herself hath none.

Thus quoth Alfred:
Wise child is Father's bliss.
If it so happens
That thou hast care of a bairn,
While he is little
Teach him men's manners.
Then when he grows older
He will turn thereto.

* * * * *

But if thou lettest him rule
In his growing time,

* * * * *

When he is older
Thou canst not control him,
He will despise thy command
And make thee often sad at heart.
Better that he had not been born.
For better is a child unborn
Than unbuxom.[1]

[1] *unbuxom*, disobedient.

Thus quoth Alfred:
If thou in thine old age
Shalt be deprived of thy worldly goods,
And thou art friendless;
Nor mayest thou with thy failing strength
Do aught for thyself,—
Then must thou thank thy Lord
For all His love,
And for all thine own life,
And for the daylight,
And for all happy things
That he for man has made.
Whersoever thou wendest
See thou always say:
"Whatever happens may God's Will happen".

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY THE UNIVERSITY PRESS,
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